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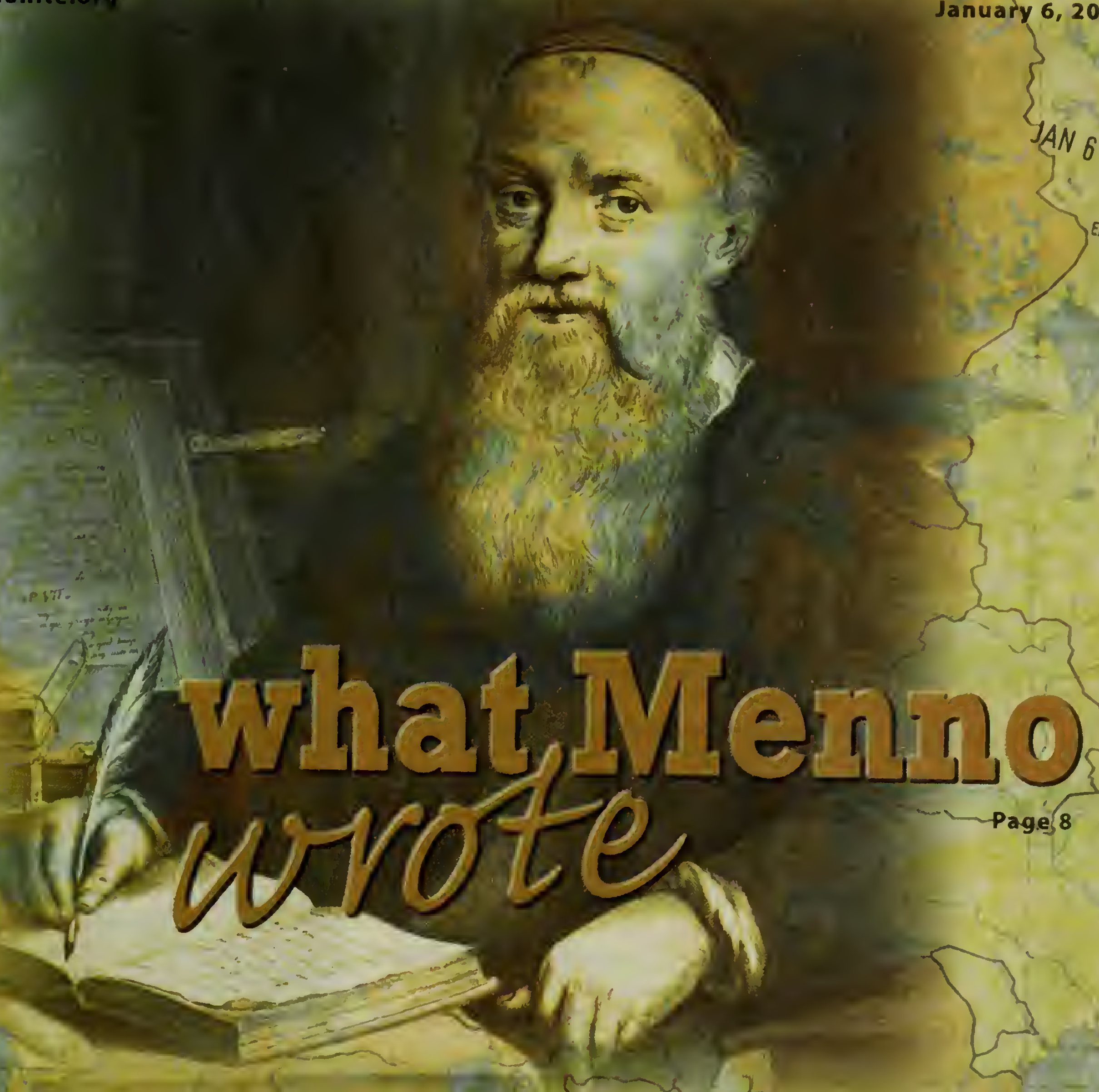

what Menno *wrote*

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32 A falling tide

Love and faithfulness

Ron Byler is associate executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

The congregation's call to worship during Advent concludes: "Love and faithfulness are embracing. Justice and peace are blending. God's presence is among us today."

On a cold Sunday morning in December 2008, at James Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., several hundred people gathered to celebrate the coming of Good News.

Eight years earlier, this congregation moved two blocks down the street into a renovated warehouse. The warehouse has been transformed into a beautiful space. A community room with windows to the busy city street outside, an airy, light-filled sanctuary, a two-story gym replacing two warehouse floors, ample office and Sunday school space and more—all helping proclaim the continuing presence of Christ in the city.

Before worship, pastor Stan Shantz said the fellowship hall will serve as an overflow homeless shelter for a month this winter. He said city pastors meet in the community room regularly. Pastor Elizabeth Nissley told me a stream of new people is coming to worship.

On this Sunday morning, pastor George Reno of Lighthouse Fellowship in Buras, La., preached. After Hurricane Katrina, the James Street congregation sent a busload of folks to Buras for the first of what has become a regular intergenerational service learning experience. Reno spoke of his love for his people and of his gratefulness for the love the James Street congregation has shown.

Strong bonds have developed between these two congregations, and they are learning, as many other Mennonite congregations have, that in giving they receive much more.

Early in the worship service, a young man lit a peace candle, and the congregation said, "Peace is a candle to show us a pathway, threatened by gusts from our rage and our greed."

Those gusts were quieted on this Sunday morning as Kathy Weaver Wenger, the worship leader, wrapped a prayer shawl around George's wife, Ruby, and reminded her that the congregation will be praying for the elderly couple and their small congregation.

I reflected on other congregations I visited recently—Neffsville Mennonite Church, just across town, where I grew up and my parents still worship; my current congregation, Eighth Street in Goshen, Ind., where I am too often absent from worship because of my work for Mennonite Church USA.; Shalom in Newton, Kan., where I worshiped months ago with friends, and Pasadena (Calif.) Mennonite Church, where a friend has accepted a call to ministry.

These congregations and hundreds more that are part of Mennonite Church USA, while different in their expressions of worship and in their understanding of what it means to follow Jesus, share a desire to be a part of God's activity in the world.

For James Street, this means service, as demonstrated in their trips to the Bayou to assist George Reno's congregation.

It means vision, as shown in its decision to tithe the renovation of their warehouse facility to help the global Anabaptist family through Mennonite World Conference.

It means courage, evidenced in ordaining Elizabeth Nissley, an act that has helped break the logjam of ordaining women that Lancaster Mennonite Conference leaders are now working through in a healthy way.

It means commitment in choosing to stay in the city to be a sign of God's kingdom.

At James Street on this Sunday morning, love and faithfulness were embracing. TM

TheMennonite

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Cover: Illustration by Dee Birkey. Menno Simons image from Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton.

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Expanding Christian Peacemaker Teams

I appreciate the vigorous responses in Readers Say to my Oct. 7, 2008, article "Expand CPT." Here are a couple brief comments:

Joe Liechty is certainly right that CPT-type activity is only one of many kinds of peacemaking that we need to expand. But we will never learn the limits (and possibilities) of CPT-type peacemaking unless we try to expand it greatly.

Half the letters responded to my three brief sentences on CPT's pro-gay activities. I did not and do not ask CPT to exclude gay volunteers. I simply want CPT to actually practice its official policy, namely, that CPT as an organization takes no stand on (and thus neither promotes nor opposes) a homosexual/lesbian lifestyle.—*Ron Sider, Philadelphia*

Harsh realities of global trade

I appreciated the articles in the Oct. 21, 2008, issue that focused on the dangers of consumerism and greed. I also agreed with a number of Al Doerksen's suggestions in "A Contrarian View of Anticonsumption Rhetoric" yet was troubled by his support for free trade and globalization. His article did not address the harsh realities of our global economy that often push farmers off their land, either because they cannot compete with subsidized grains from the United States or because corporations need the land for mining or to grow luxury foods for us. Farmers, who once grew much of their own food, are forced to look for jobs elsewhere and buy food controlled by others. Also, free trade policies often mean that factory workers, whose industries had been somewhat protected from foreign competition, are now laid off and must also look for new jobs.

These dynamics were clear in the city of Nogales, Mexico, which I visited recently on a Mennonite Central Committee learning tour. Over the past few decades, this town has grown from 25,000 to over 400,000 as people have come looking for jobs and adequate income. Most live in squatter communities without access to plumbing or electricity. Competition for jobs is fierce, so even those with fairly good jobs earn only 20 percent of what a minimum wage worker earns in the United States. Yet food prices are even higher than what we pay here, and those who have permission come across the border to buy their groceries. Many feel they have no choice but to leave their loved ones and risk everything in order to come to the United States to look for jobs that will support their families.

I know these issues are not easy. But as we discuss economics, I urge us to give special attention to those most vulnerable to exploitation and violence and push for solutions that truly work for them.—*Linda Gehman Peachey, Lancaster, Pa.*

Consumerism and greed

I appreciated the articles by Valerie Weaver-Zercher and Katie Funk Wiebe in the Oct. 21, 2008, issue. Instead of feeding judgment or guilt trips, both provided refreshingly positive and applicable advice on ways to resist pressures toward unhealthy overconsumption and to begin to free ourselves from our desires by owning up to them (living in Africa does not render me immune to such pressures or desires).

Yet immediately following their well-balanced advice, Al Doerksen seems to counter it with a call to extravagant or even self-indulgent living built on the assumption that all consumption automatically benefits the producers—therefore, the more the better.

Doerksen makes a valid point when he states, "Fair trade is a good thing but only works if people consume." But a more important point is the inverse: Consumption is a good thing but is only just if goods are fairly traded. Otherwise, rebuttals to "anticonsumption rhetoric" can become a naïve self-justification for indulging every material desire while attempting to clear the conscience of the responsibility to weigh the potential positive and negative impacts on one's own life, the fragile biosphere or an underpaid producer.

Go ahead and buy that nice work of art or bag of coffee from Ten Thousand Villages or another fair trade store, where you can be assured that the person who made it is indeed benefitting from your purchase.—*Julia Smucker, Orodara, Burkina Faso*

IN THIS ISSUE

Our identity as Mennonites begins with Menno Simons, but many of us may not know what he wrote. Lawrence Ressler reports what he found in, "I Finally Read Menno" (page 8). Greg Albright (page 12) suggests that our identity comes from another source: gardening. From Europe we have a third view of identity; Linda Oyer makes the case for "unity through diversity" (page 14). Young adults contribute several ways in this issue. Brad Miller (page 18) suggests there may be a meltdown for higher education schools similar to the U.S. housing market's; he calls for renewed attention to the needs of Mennonite Church USA colleges and universities. At an event designed to raise money for young adult delegate travel to next year's Mennonite World Conference assembly, one young seminarian won a "preach-off" contest with a Scripture text focusing on beer and wine (page 19).—*Editor*

A lot more is required
I appreciated Matt Friesen's article about an evangelical peace and justice church (Nov. 18, 2008). This emphasis can cut across liberal and conservative lines within the church. But for this to succeed, a lot more is required than Friesen suggests.

If we simply recognize that many from other faith traditions may be attracted to our peace and justice emphasis and target them, or if we simply put more Mennonite Church USA resources into building up our current peace and justice structures, that may bring in more people. But it will do little to bridge the gap between left-leaning peace activists and the evangelicals in the church.

We need renewed teaching and preaching coming from Mennonite churches on the centrality of peace and justice to the call to follow Christ. Peace and justice are inseparable from the kingdom of God and are central to the meaning of salvation.

When Jesus talks about who is saved and who isn't, he describes a judgment based solely on how we have responded to human need—"I was hungry and you fed me." When Jesus calls us to be peacemakers and love our enemies, he ties it to what it means to be children of God—a God who treats enemies and friends alike and who loves enemies even unto death. If we are to be followers of Christ, we can do no less. We can only tell a dying, violent world about God's love if we live lives that demonstrate God's way of loving. That was the point of Jesus' call to be like him and like God.

The message that God loves us and calls us to love is the heart of the gospel and our evangelism. It is the basis of our salvation. Until we understand that, peace and justice will always be a sidebar or add-on to the gospel.—*Duane Beachey, MCC Great Lakes, Appalachia Office/SWAP, Whitesburg, Ky.*

Jesus, peace and Islam
Thank you, Seth Ramer (Oct. 21, 2008) and Jack T. Miller (Dec. 2, 2008), for your well-written letters addressing Mennonite Central Committee's "peace" meetings with President Ahmadinejad of Iran. Ahmadinejad's roots go back to Genesis 16, which readily explains his hatred of Israel. Sorry, but peace lamps won't do the trick. I don't think Jesus had global peace meetings with government leaders in mind when he gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28 to his followers.

Peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of God. I see no evidence of Jesus, God's Son, being presented to Ahmadinejad in any of the meetings with him. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 speaks to the importance of the cross as the only gateway to eternal peace that Jesus alone can bring.—*A. Dale Welty, Wakarusa, Ind.*

Islam clearly views Christ as one of God's prophets. That fact makes Jack Miller's claim that "Islam is the enemy of Christ" (Readers Say, Dec. 2, 2008) difficult to understand. Our Lord calls us to love our enemies. This suggests that words are better than bombs for dealing with national leaders. Miller seems to lack faith in Jesus' message, and he overlooks "Blessed are the peacemakers." Especially when our government refuses to pursue understanding with another nation, peacemakers such as the Mennonite Central Committee people who talked with Iran's president about resolving issues of conflict deserve our support.—*Ray Elvin Horst, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Paper problem?

To avoid increasing subscription prices during the current economic recession, we begin using a lighter paper with this issue of *The Mennonite*. Not only is this a "greener" paper—requiring less processing—it also provides some savings in postage and freight costs. However, this lighter paper may not fare well in its handling by the U.S. Postal System. If your copy arrives with a cover or pages missing, please call 800-790-2498, and we will mail you a replacement copy inside a first-class envelope.—*Editor*

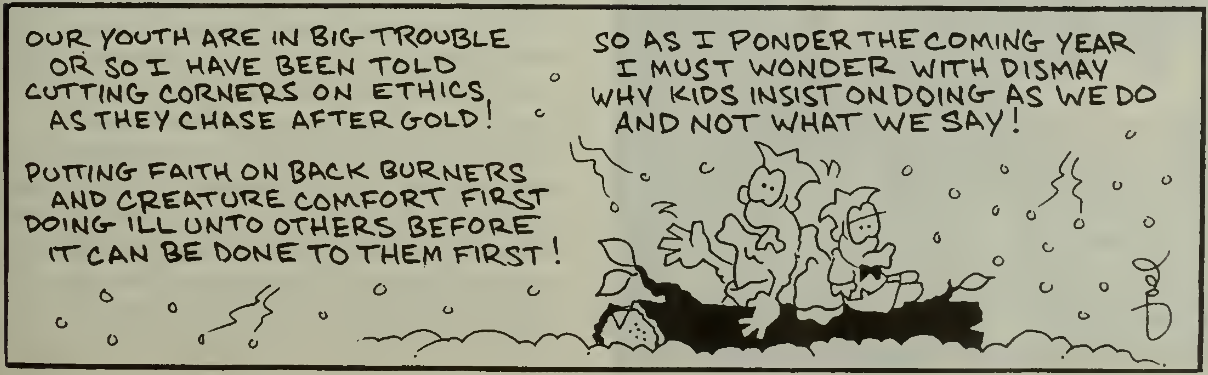
ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Regarding last year's New Year's resolution(s): (37 votes)

○ I did not make any (70 %)
○ I kept mine (16 %)
○ I did not keep mine (8 %)
○ I do not remember (5 %)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


OUR YOUTH ARE IN BIG TROUBLE
OR SO I HAVE BEEN TOLD
CUTTING CORNERS ON ETHICS,
AS THEY CHASE AFTER GOLD!
PUTTING FAITH ON BACK BURNERS
AND CREATURE COMFORT FIRST
DOING ILL UNTO OTHERS BEFORE
IT CAN BE DONE TO THEM FIRST!
SO AS I PONDER THE COMING YEAR
I MUST WONDER WITH DISMAY
WHY KIDS INSIST ON DOING AS WE DO
AND NOT WHAT WE SAY!

IN BRIEF

Spying on pacifists

"Lucy" was an undercover Maryland State police trooper who between 2005 and 2007 infiltrated rallies and meetings of nonviolent groups. Maryland officials now concede that, based on information gathered by "Lucy" and others, state police wrongly listed at least 53 Americans as terrorists in a criminal intelligence database. Among those labeled as terrorists: two Catholic nuns, a former Democratic congressional candidate, a lifelong pacifist and a registered lobbyist. One suspect's file warned that she was "involved in puppetmaking and allows anarchists to utilize her property for meetings."—*The Los Angeles Times*

Mennonite school on toxin list

According to *USA Today*, Locust Grove Mennonite School in Smoketown, Pa., is one of 435 schools in America that might be exposing students to dangerously high levels of airborne toxins from nearby industries. The school was evaluated based on computer simulations that predict the path of toxic chemicals released by companies located near schools. Richard Thomas, superintendent of the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School system, says the report fails to explain why the air near Locust Grove would be any more dangerous than at other nearby schools. —*Intelligencer Journal*

Schrag, Green recover from medical problems

Jim Schrag

Stanley Green

GOSHEN, Ind.—Two Mennonite Church USA leaders are recovering from serious medical problems. On Nov. 22, 2008, executive director Jim Schrag had double bypass surgery at Wesley Medical Center in Wichita, Kan. He plans to begin working part-time this month from his Mennonite Church USA office in Newton, Kan.

On Dec. 3, 2008, Mennonite Mission Network's executive director Stanley Green checked into Goshen (Ind.) General Hospital after experiencing shortness of breath. Tests indicated that Green had a pulmonary embolism (blood clot). After successful treatment, doctors discharged Green from the hospital Dec. 7. He returned to work at the Mission Network's office in Elkhart, Ind., on Dec. 10.

"I am relearning that my time (our times) are in God's hands and that I (we) are not in control," Green said in a Dec. 16 email. "It has been a blessing to find myself part of a community of caring that helped the process of getting well."—*Everett J. Thomas*

MasterCard Foundation and MEDA serve youth

TORONTO—The MasterCard Foundation and Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) announced a $5 million program to create inclusive financial services and education for youth in Morocco and Egypt.

This five-year program, called Youth Invest, will enable microfinance institutions to develop and test innovative products, reaching approximately 50,000 people between the ages of 15 and 24, especially those living in rural areas.

MEDA will partner with leading microfinance institutions in both countries to study the needs of employed as well as unemployed youth and to design appropriate financial products, such as savings for education or loans to start a small business. The program will also provide youth-specific services, including financial and business-related training to develop youth entrepreneurship skills.—*MEDA*

Jon Styer

EMU students take a 'siesta' during chapel

In a chapel skit on Dec. 10, 2008, students at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., demonstrate a "siesta" to share about their cross-cultural semester to Spain and Morocco.—*EMU*

Former mission worker indicted Nov. 17

HARRISONBURG, Va.—On Nov. 17, 2008, a grand jury indicted Andrew Max Eggman, Harrisonburg, on charges of producing child pornography and taking indecent liberties with a child stemming from an incident in August 2004.

Through Virginia Mennonite Missions, Eggman and Lisa, his wife, were assigned to teach English in Chongqing, China, beginning July 2005. Their appointment was terminated (effective Dec. 2, 2005), and they were asked to return home in December 2005, after VMM received allegations on the part of Andrew prior to assignment.

"We welcome your thoughts and prayers for those directly affected during this time," says Loren Horst, president of VMM. "This situation has not been easy, either for the extended Eggman family, Virginia Mennonite Missions or for others."

Sources close to the investigation say he used a hidden camera to film a minor relative having sex with international exchange students enrolled at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg. There is no indication that any of the students were minors. EMU officials say they are cooperating with the investigation but declined to comment further.—*Daily News-Record* and Virginia Mennonite Missions

Baltimore youth give comforters to refugees

AKRON, Pa.—The North Baltimore Mennonite Church youth group first knotted comforters for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) at an Atlantic Coast Conference youth retreat in September 2008. Then Heather Yoder, NBMC youth coordinator, heard through Dr. Mohammed (an assumed name), an Iraqi refugee with ties to the church, that newly arrived Iraqi refugees now living in Baltimore needed blankets. Yoder saw a way to connect people and projects through service.

Larry Bartel

hanksgiving at Hesston College includes race

omomi Shimoda, a Hesston (Kan.) College student from amato, Japan, crosses the finish line first among the women ith a time of 13:10. The Howard Hustle run on Nov. 28, 2008, as one of many Thanksgiving weekend activities at Hesston. *Hesston College*

MCC provided comforters to the youth group, and Yoder invited Mohammed to speak at the youth gathering. Yoder emphasized that the meeting was not just about distributing blankets; it was also about showing signs of friendship and learning more about the situation in Iraq. Part of her vision is that the youth interact with the people they serve, so the events become personal experiences.—*MCC*

Christian Peacemaker Team to go to Iraq

CHICAGO/TORONTO—Christian Peacemaker Teams announces a delegation to Iraq for April 18-May 2. The Kurds of northern Iraq faced discrimination, terror and death under the regime of Saddam Hussein. As the security situation deteriorated in southern and central Iraq after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, thousands of displaced people fled to the Kurdish Regional Government-controlled area in the north. Northern border villages have suffered military attacks from Turkey and Iran. CPT's April delegation will be based in the KRG city of Suleimaniya. CPT has had a presence in Iraq since October 2002, first in Baghdad and since November 2006 in the Kurdish north.—*CPT*

Documentary about addictions to air on ABC

HARRISONBURG, Va.—ABC-TV has selected a documentary produced last year by Mennonite Media to air in the "Vision and Values" programming time slot shared by major faith groups.

Finding Hope in Recovery: Families Living with Addiction began airing at the discretion of local TV stations on Jan. 4 and will continue through Feb. 15. The documentary tells challenging and heartbreaking stories of families facing addictions and traveling the stages of recovery—and setback. The program emphasizes that efforts that include faith-based or "higher power" components are the most successful for long-term recovery.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Bluffton partnership to offer senior education

BLUFFTON, Ohio—Bluffton University and Baton Rouge Senior Medical Center in Lima, Ohio, have teamed up to offer Institute for Learning in Retirement courses on Baton Rouge's premises, which began in January. The partnership provides retired and senior adults in the Lima area with convenient access to continuing-education offerings. Classes will be offered on Tuesday mornings and afternoons and run for six weeks at a time. —*Bluffton University*

Inmates, former inmates launch music CD

WINNIPEG, Man.—Five participants in the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) prisoner visitation program have launched a CD of their original music. The five musicians have been incarcerated or are still incarcerated in Manitoba correctional institutions. Their original compositions include songs of hope and inspiration, piano pieces and folk music. The CD, "Beyond the Din," gives a voice to people whose voices are seldom heard, says Murray Barkman, coordinator of Open Circle, an MCC Manitoba program that supports prisoners and ex-prisoners through prison visitations and community integration. All proceeds from the sale of the CD will support the Open Circle program —a program that is an integral part of the lives of the five musicians. Excerpts can be heard at mcc.org/manitoba.

"There is something in this for us, too," says Jim Motherall, 58, who has spent 32 years in prison. "People who have been beaten down commit crimes. If you feel good about yourself you don't commit crimes. This project comes with responsibility."—*MCC*

—*compiled by Anna Groff*

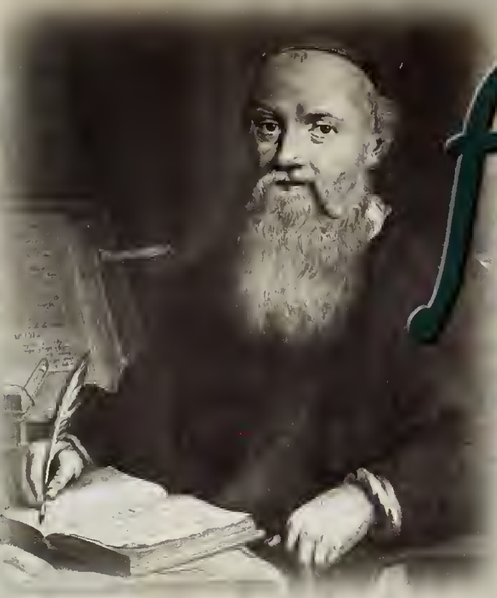
IN BRIEF

Phil Hess named Philhaven CEO

Philip D. Hess is the new CEO of Philhaven, a nonprofit behavioral healthcare organization. Hess's appointment as CEO is the culmination of a comprehensive nationwide search that began in June 2007, following the retirement of former CEO LaVern Yutzy after a 30-year tenure. Hess has served at Philhaven since 1988, most recently as interim CEO.—*Philhaven*

Marc Yoder leads Faculty Calling Project

Marc Yoder of Cotopaxi, Colo., started directing the Faculty Calling Project in January. Through Mennonite Education Agency, the project is a collaborative effort to maintain a database of candidates who are interested in teaching at a Mennonite college, university or seminary. Yoder earned a doctorate in education from the University of Iowa, then served as executive vice president for academic affairs at Hesston (Kan.) College, starting in 1998. Most recently he served as a leadership consultant for Mennonite Disaster Service.—*Mennonite Church USA*



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finally I ^ read

Menno did not give up his comfortable life as a priest until shortly after his brother, who had joined a militaristic group of Anabaptists, was killed either in fighting or by execution.

I had never read any of Menno Simon's writings, though I grew up in a Mennonite home and have been an active member of a Mennonite church for 40 years. I even graduated from a Mennonite high school and a Mennonite college. And when I asked Mennonite friends and colleagues if they had ever read anything written by Menno Simons, few had.

Curiosity got the best of me. I decided to read everything written by Menno. I went to the *Complete Works of Menno Simons* (Herald Press, 1986), which contains everything Menno wrote in one volume of roughly 1,000 pages. As it turned out, I did not read the works of Menno just once but again and again. I found myself drawn into the world of the man who has influenced hundreds of thousands of followers who now call themselves Mennonites. I reread some of the writings because they were so inspirational, others because they were so confusing. Here is a bit of what I found.

Important facts and dates: Menno was born in 1496 in Holland and ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood in 1524. Four years after the Anabaptist movement began, at the age of 32, Menno studied the Bible to see if the Anabaptists' claims about errors in Catholic teachings were correct. He gradually conceded they were.

Menno did not give up his comfortable life as a priest until shortly after his brother, who had joined a militaristic group of Anabaptists, was killed either in fighting or by execution. In 1536, at the age of 40, Menno left the Catholic Church and joined the Obbenites, a group of Anabaptists under the leadership of Obbe Philips.

Lessons from reading Menno Simons

Menno

by Lawrence E. Ressler

Soon Menno was pressed into a leadership role. He accepted the responsibility, albeit reluctantly, knowing he would have to live the stressful and dangerous life of an outcast Anabaptist. Menno gave himself to the work in spite of the dangers and the need to move from place to place to avoid arrest, torture and almost certain execution. Within eight years, public authorities referred to the Obbenite group as the "Menists" in recognition of Menno's influence. He served as the principal leader and spokesperson of this Anabaptist group for 25 years until he died of natural causes in 1561.

What Menno wrote about: There are 42 known writings attributed to Menno. This is more than any other Anabaptist. Twenty-five of his writings are classified in the *Complete Works* as books and tracts. Seventeen are letters, meditations, prayers and other writings. Among them are two hymns, one that was to be sung to the tune "Where May She Be, This Darling Mine."

Menno's writings are varied, have a strongly practical purpose and always focus on the problems the young Anabaptist church faced. The Anabaptist movement was only 11 years old when Menno joined the Obbenite group. Menno's early writings articulated theological beliefs for both church members and those who had questions about the group, for example, the short pamphlet "The New Birth" (my favorite) and "The Foundation of Christian Doctrine," both published within several years after he joined the group.

But Menno's world was turbulent. The Anabaptist movement had spawned heretics who led the state churches to denounce Anabaptists of all kinds. Some writings were direct challenges to these heretical Anabaptist movements. "The Blasphemy of John of Leiden," for example, attempted to discredit the Münsterites, a revolutionary Anabaptist group that attracted hundreds of followers, including Menno's brother. Several writings challenged another Anabaptist heretic named David Joris, who claimed to be a prophet in the lineage of David and espoused polygamy.

As spokesperson for the Obbenites, Menno also corresponded with government officials and the theological leaders of other groups. Four of Menno's writings are efforts to get the government leaders to stop their persecution. One of the most moving pieces is "A Pathetic Supplication to All Magistrates," in which Menno writes, "And so we beg your Noble Excellences again, for Jesus' sake, to lay aside thoroughly all hostile thoughts against your poor orphans." Four of his writings are debates with other theologians in which Menno clarifies what the Obbenite Anabaptists believe and challenges false accusations. They include a reply to Gellius Faber, a Lutheran minister who had written an attack on Anabaptists.

Menno confesses that he did not read the Bible until two years after he became a priest.

The largest group of Menno's writings relate to his work as an elder in the young church. Some were words of concern about

Continued on page 10

SIMONIS ATAT ANNO
MENNO SIMONIS

Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton

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developments in the church; others were letters of encouragement to church members, including his "Pastoral Letter to the Amsterdam Church," which was suffering from a plague, and a "Letter of Consolation to a Sick Saint" who was struggling with doubt. Eight of the writings deal with excommunication, an issue Menno and the church struggled with during almost all of Menno's 24 years of leadership. The last thing he wrote, "Reply to Sylis and Lemke," was a strongly worded response to an attack on the official church position supporting excommunication by two church leaders.

Throughout his writings, Menno challenges, scolds and pleads with all who read his writings to turn from their evil ways and walk in a godly manner.

Four prominent themes became evident to me as I read the works of Menno.

Give heed to the Word of God: Scripture was foundational for Menno. The tone is set in his first book, "The Blasphemy of John of Leiden," where he writes, "Let all give heed to the Word of God." Menno was well read and a man of careful reason. But the Bible, especially the New Testament, is central to what he believed and was authoritative in what he did.

However, Menno's passion for Scripture was a late development. He confesses that he did not read the Bible until two years after he became a priest. In part due to the execution of Sicke Snijder, a local Anabaptist who was beheaded for being rebaptized, Menno read the Bible. He devoured the Scriptures, and he peppers all his writings with Scriptural references.

Menno does not claim to be perfect in his understanding of the Scriptures. Repeatedly he invites readers to correct him if he is in error. The basis of the correction, however, must come from the Scriptures. In "Reply to Gellius Faber," for example, Menno writes: "If I cannot maintain my doctrine and faith with Scriptures and if I cannot prove their doctrine and faith to be deceiving, that is, in those matters that keep us apart, then I will not refuse to acknowledge my fault before the whole world, to retract my doctrine and with my books to enter into the fire."

Godly walk: Menno emphasized that Christian faith transforms behavior. The full text of the statement quoted earlier is, "Let all give heed to the Word of God and abide by it." In "The Spiritual Resurrection," Menno writes, "The Scriptures admonish the truly regenerated and resurrected ones that they should take heed to their calling and continue perfect in a new, godly walk."

Throughout his writings, Menno encourages, challenges, scolds and pleads with all who read his writings to turn from their evil ways and walk in a godly manner. In "The New Birth," Menno writes: "I tell you again, they want to be the Christian church, though it is evident that in all their actions they are not Christians but carnal, proud, avaricious, gluttonous, lewd, drunken, idolatrous, blind heathen. And what is worse, some of them are unmerciful, murderous, cruel and bloody devils, for many of their works are done according to the will of the devil."

One aspect of Menno's call for godly walk was his support for the ban and excommunication. Not only was this emphasis based on Scriptures but was consistent with Menno's call to the Catholic, Lutheran and Zwinglian church leaders to have their members live lives that demonstrated Christ-like behavior. Furthermore, Menno and the church had to deal with Anabaptist heretics who were causing significant problems inside and outside the church. The practical problems associated with the ban and excommunication emerged almost immediately and caused Menno and the church considerable grief for the entire time he was a leader. Menno wrote more frequently about this topic than any other, on eight occasions.

An Evangelical: Menno was evangelical. His call to faith was not the toned-down "friendship evangelism" I had become comfortable with. Menno called himself an evangelical preacher and presented himself as one for whom I had developed some theological resistance. He states, for example, in "The New Birth": "My dearly beloved reader, take heed to the Word of the Lord and learn to know the true God. I warn you faithfully to take it, if you please. He will not save you nor forgive your sins nor show you his mercy and grace except according to his Word; namely, if you repent and if you believe, if you are born of him, if you do what he has commanded and walk as he walks."

In one of Menno's most popular writings, "The Foundation of Christian Doctrine," even while pleading for mercy and an end to the persecution he calls government leaders to repentance using language that seems to have fallen in disfavor in recent years: "Dear sirs, wake up, it is yet today. Do not boast that you are of royal blood and are called gracious lords, for it is but smoke, dust and pride. But boast in this and rejoice if so be you are born of God or have become a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 1 Peter 1:9. Repent sincerely with a repentance acceptable to God, wail and weep."

Christ-centered theology: Menno draws from both the Old and New Testaments in his writings. But the life and teachings of Christ was the lens through which the rest of Scripture must be viewed. All his writings were prefaced with his favorite verse, 1 Corinthians 3:11, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."

In "I Do Not Cease Teaching and Writing," Menno offers this challenge: "Whosoever does not believe that our doctrine is the pure, undefiled and saving doctrine of Jesus Christ may piously examine the extant Scriptures of the New Testament and he will notice and acknowledge that our doctrine is the pure doctrine, testimony and Scripture of Christ Jesus, however much his reluctant, lazy, rebellious, refractory, selfish and disobedient flesh may oppose, become affrighted, tremble and be owed thereat."

One of my big surprises was the lack of overt attention Menno gave to many of the attributes that have been associated with being Mennonite. I had to search to find statements about nonconformity, simple living and peace. I found support for these attributes, but they were embedded in writings about other topics.

It is Menno's Christ-centered theology that is paramount. As Menno appeals to the New Testament and the life and teachings of Christ, he embraces a peace position and affirms simple living. But he also defends the role of the government to control evil using force and supports a much harsher form of the ban and excommunication than many are comfortable with. All these positions are susceptible to change if, based on Scriptural evidence, a better case can be made than what Menno believed was the case. The nonnegotiable was the authority of Scripture, especially the New Testament and the example of Christ.

So what: Reading everything Menno wrote is not for everyone. Much of what he wrote is not meaningful without becoming familiar with the characters involved and understanding the context in which he wrote.

But every Mennonite should read some of the writings of Menno. If I were to point to one reading, it would be the 14-page piece called "The New Birth," which contains the essence of what being a Christian was for Menno. A second piece worth reading is his personal apology, "I Do Not Cease Teaching and Writing." Here one sees the passion Menno had for following Christ at all cost, even to the point of death. A third piece worth reading is "The Cross of the Saints," which consoles a church suffering from persecution. Menno writes: "O soldiers of God, prepare yourselves and fear not. This winepress you must tread. This narrow way you must walk, and through this narrow gate you must enter into life. The Lord is your strength, your comfort and refuge. He sits with you in prisons and dungeons; he flies with you to foreign lands; he accompanies you through fire and water; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

Reading Menno's writing has helped me understand what he believed and why he believed it. It has also increased my appreciation for his strength of character as he struggled to live out his faith under the most trying and dangerous circumstances. Most importantly, it inspired my faith.

Reading Menno's writing has increased my appreciation for his strength of character as he struggled to live out his faith under the most trying and dangerous circumstances.

Lawrence E. Ressler is provost at Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kan., and a member of First Mennonite Church in Hillsboro. He will offer an online course on Menno Simons this summer. Anyone interested should contact him at lawrencer@tabor.edu.

Does love of gardening make one a Mennonite?

Of Mennonites

by Greg Albright

My family joined a Mennonite church when I was 7. I was baptized at 14, but I only realized that I was some kind of Mennonite when I spent three afternoon hours in the vegetable garden six years later. I had invited my college friends to the garden via email, but in our rigorous academic environment, I wasn't surprised that they found the cultivation of knowledge more profitable than the cultivation of tomatoes. I suspect they were also concerned that gardening with a Mennonite would require some sort of specialized dress code.

"Can we garden with Greg?" they probably said, reading my email.

"Well, we know he sends emails, and he dresses like a regular guy."

"Yeah, but gardening—farming—that's what the Amish do. It's like their religion."

"I think 'Amish' is their religion."

Compared with many people, I've not spent many years as a member of a Mennonite family, and only six as a baptized member of the church. I am not the most Mennonite of all the Mennonites out there. For many of my friends in public school, however, I was the only Mennonite they knew—the cultural placeholder for any and all Anabaptists outside my school district. I spent a lot of time talking about what Mennonites are not.

I am not the most Mennonite of all the Mennonites out there. For many of my friends in public school, however, I was the only Mennonite they knew.

"Some Pennsylvania groups like the Amish and Mennonites don't use Christmas trees," said my fourth grade teacher in our Pennsylvania history class.

"We have a Christmas tree," I said, "and we're Mennonites."

Such explanations became routine.

"Is that why your car has a black bumper?"

"But wait, you have a computer."

"I can take pictures of you without stealing your soul, right?"

Naturally, when my housemates and I sat down to watch Harrison Ford in *Witness* not long ago, all eyes were on me.

"No, my family has a car. And electricity," I said.

'The Mennonite game': We also have a vegetable garden and a wash line. We compost, and we don't have cable TV. High-speed Internet only arrived a few weeks ago. I choose not to mention these things during the movie, lest I get more questions about my horses and buggies. Despite the perceptions of my immediate peer group, my family is not a traditional Mennonite family, at least not in the genealogical sense. We are the benchwarmers in 'the Mennonite game,' having no blood ties to anyone named Yoder or Moyer.

But we are still Mennonites. Dad has been an on-again/off-again pastor in our church for years. Now he and Mom are filling their empty nest with their seminary textbooks. We cook from the *More-With-Less Cookbook* and with vegetables from our garden. Mom sent me my own copy of *More-With-Less*, knowing I'd be cooking for my housemates and for myself. That's what took me among the tomatoes. I am the only member of my house who knows where the basil is or which tomatoes are ready to pick or the difference between weeds and cilantro. During the warmer months, I walked to my friends' and classmates' houses delivering produce. Gardening is my escape from the world of papers, research and studying.

When I called my sister and told her how I'd taken over the management of the garden, she said, "You sound like Dad."

"Before I went out to garden today," I said, "I looked for a big straw sun hat."

"Yup," she said, "You're Dad."

We both have the same image—Dad, in his twisted straw hat, the crown fraying away from the brim, out in the garden while we sit in the kitchen eating breakfast. When we were in elementary, middle, and even high school, every summer morning was gardening morning. We inevitably awoke to a list of chores, then spent our breakfast bargaining for them: Is weeding the bean patch more arduous than deadheading the irises? If you sweep the sidewalk, then should I pick the tomatoes? We likened ourselves to unjustly indentured servants, longing for our days of respite (Sundays, church; Saturdays, yard sales). We have learned to love both yard sales

and Hobbits

and church, but all those hours spent in the garden have instilled in me the opposite of the dread I felt at seeing the chore list. Maybe it was Dad's penchant for gardening that drove him to forsake the suburban socialite Presbyterians for the Mennonite church. He has passed that penchant on to at least one of his children.

I am happy to be defined as part of a group known (at least in my part of the world) for its love of food and its knowledge of family ties.

Mennonite virtues: What I haven't explained to my housemates here is that gardening is probably on some unwritten list of Mennonite virtues—not a prerequisite for baptism but close. To them, it doesn't matter if I garden because my father gardens or because my church gardens. I am that Mennonite guy, and of course he gardens. Didn't you see the farm in *Witness*?

So it is in the garden that I come to terms with my Mennonite identity, kicking off my shoes and looking for young pumpkins under the leaves.

"You look like a Hobbit," one of my friends said.

"Thank you," I said.

I've long felt an affinity for J.R.R. Tolkien's barefoot agrarians, ever since I was 14. It may be a coincidence that my baptism and my first reading of *The Lord of the Rings* occurred in the same year, but I like to think that it isn't. Only recently did it occur to me that Hobbits are not the only group of countrified gourmand farmer/genealogists with which I identify. Those three-and-a-half-foot wanderers are Middle-Earth's answer to Mennonites. It may at first seem demeaning, but the more I think about it, the happier I am to be defined as part of a group known (at least in my part of the world) for its love of food and its knowledge of family ties. The modus operandi of the Hobbits is not fighting but walking. Much like Mennonites. Like many of the Mennonites I've met (and aspire to be like), Hobbits are always willing to attempt a great journey into the face of evil, but they are also ready to return, barefoot, to their gardens.

So it was with great reservation that I accepted the end of the summer gardening season. The tomatoes were done, as was the eggplant, and the pumpkin failed to produce any fruit. Despite all this, however, I will spend the winter as a Mennonite. If the time comes, maybe I'll get to watch *The Lord of the Rings* with my housemates.

Greg Albright is a member of Whitehall (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

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How do we connect unity and diversity?

Praising God with our diversity

by Linda Oyer

Unity and diversity: How do you connect these two words? Unity in diversity? Unity despite diversity? Unity without diversity?

Ephesians 4:11-16 suggests unity through diversity. In this text, the apostle Paul seems to say that differences are essential to the growth of each person and the whole Christian community.

Danielle César (Salvation Army) washes Christelle Doy's (Evangelical) feet while Isabelle Carlier (Catholic) waits her turn during the Women in Leadership conference where Linda Oyer gave this address. The professional women participants came from different denominations and different French-speaking countries around the world.

For a culinary parallel, when one makes a cake, it is not done despite the flour or despite the eggs but rather through or as a result of the combination of different ingredients. The final delicious taste is a result of the integration of all ingredients.

Our human tendency is to create unity by erasing differences. We try to transform the other into our likeness or exclude the presence of the other who is different because that difference calls into question who we are. The resulting uniformity, then, presents only the illusion of unity.

We try to transform the other into our likeness or exclude the presence of the other who is different because that difference calls into question who we are.

Even God's own nature shows unity through diversity: one God in three persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). We also see unity through diversity in the human body, in the natural world and in the Bible. The Bible contains 66 different books with different literary genres, written by different authors in different historical contexts. The unity of the Bible is composed through the diversity of each story and is based on what God is doing in human history.

Observing how God creates unity, we are led to understand that true Spirit-given unity requires diversity. Different aspects of an entity do not alter its nature but constitute its true essence.

From the beginning of Christianity, there have been different spiritualities, different ways of understanding and living out our relationship with God. Spirituality does not come in one-size-fits-all. Though there is a common core of spirituality, we find different accents within the New Testament itself. Each accent has its strong points, its "pearls" to offer to the larger Christian body. Yet each also has inherent and potential pitfalls if not held with other spiritualities.

Matthew's Gospel emphasizes a lifestyle of radical obedience to the teaching of Jesus. But focusing on holiness can degenerate into a judgmental legalism that cuts us off from God's grace and our own humanity.

Luke's Gospel accentuates working for social justice and reaching out to the marginalized and most vulnerable in society. It underlines that salvation is not just about catapulting a person's soul into heaven but includes shalom, well-being and reconciliation for all people. This accent, however, can lead to activism and believing that the only criteria of success are visible, measurable results that depend on one's efforts.

John's Gospel reflects a contemplative spirituality of direct union with God, in a "loving attention" to this triune God who dwells within us. This form of spirituality reminds us of the importance of silence and solitude in the Christian experience. The risk is an individualistic, disembodied spirituality that neglects engagement with injustice in the world.

The Book of Acts underlines the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering the church for witness and growth. It reminds us of the importance of actively experiencing the power and gifts of the Spirit in the church. The potential danger, though, is that we treat faith as an amusement park, looking for ever more spectacular spiritual attractions and equating spiritual growth with manifestations of power. There may also be a Harry Potter tendency that believes that all we need to do is wave the magic wand of our faith and God will transform our suffering into blessing.

Many of Paul's writings stress the importance of correct doctrine, the objectivity of revelation and its faithful transmission in "fighting the good fight." The danger may be seeing oneself as the sole guardian of the faith, ready to raise the sword against those deemed to hold false doctrines. There may be an unwillingness to cooperate with others if there is not total agreement on all doctrinal points.

Welcoming the strengths of each form of spirituality keeps the church balanced and checks potential pitfalls inherent in each expression.

To build a truly unified community, we need all these different accents. Welcoming the strengths of each form of spirituality keeps the church balanced and checks potential pitfalls inherent in each expression. As a community excludes one or more of these forms, its spirituality becomes impoverished and distances itself from Jesus' example. We need each other with our different forms of spirituality in order to grow into fuller Christlikeness, into the "measure of the full stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4.13).

Christ's bride, the church in her diversity, wears a pearl necklace. Each spirituality is a pearl, nestled among the other pearls. Each has its own shape, color and radiance. Each pearl is different but is united by a single strand to make up the necklace that adorns Christ's body.

Linda Oyer is a staff member of the Paris Mennonite Center, where she develops and teaches Anabaptist theology, Christian spirituality and spiritual direction. This article was adapted from the closing address of the second international French-speaking conference for Women in Leadership held last April.

A widow foresees a new world in the children.

A remarkable widow on the western edges of our city has turned her modest home and courtyard into a harbor for the burgeoning numbers of children cast adrift here in this maelstrom called AIDS. Over several months I kept company with this amazing family, wanting to catch a little of what binds them joyfully together and snatch a moment or two of song and fun with them along the way.

During one of my visits I learned that the children had set about raising funds to build a small shelter for a destitute woman, now felled by a stroke, who used to collect kindling amid the thorn scrub in their neighborhood.

One afternoon I happened by the widow's courtyard. The children were waiting for me. They insisted I follow them and that I bring the traveler's guitar I often carry in my battered 4x4. This unusual procession threaded past the broken fencing, the cinder-block shanties and ditches, the odd, emaciated dogs and mildly curious village folk and finally mustered in a forlorn courtyard with a matchbox shelter.

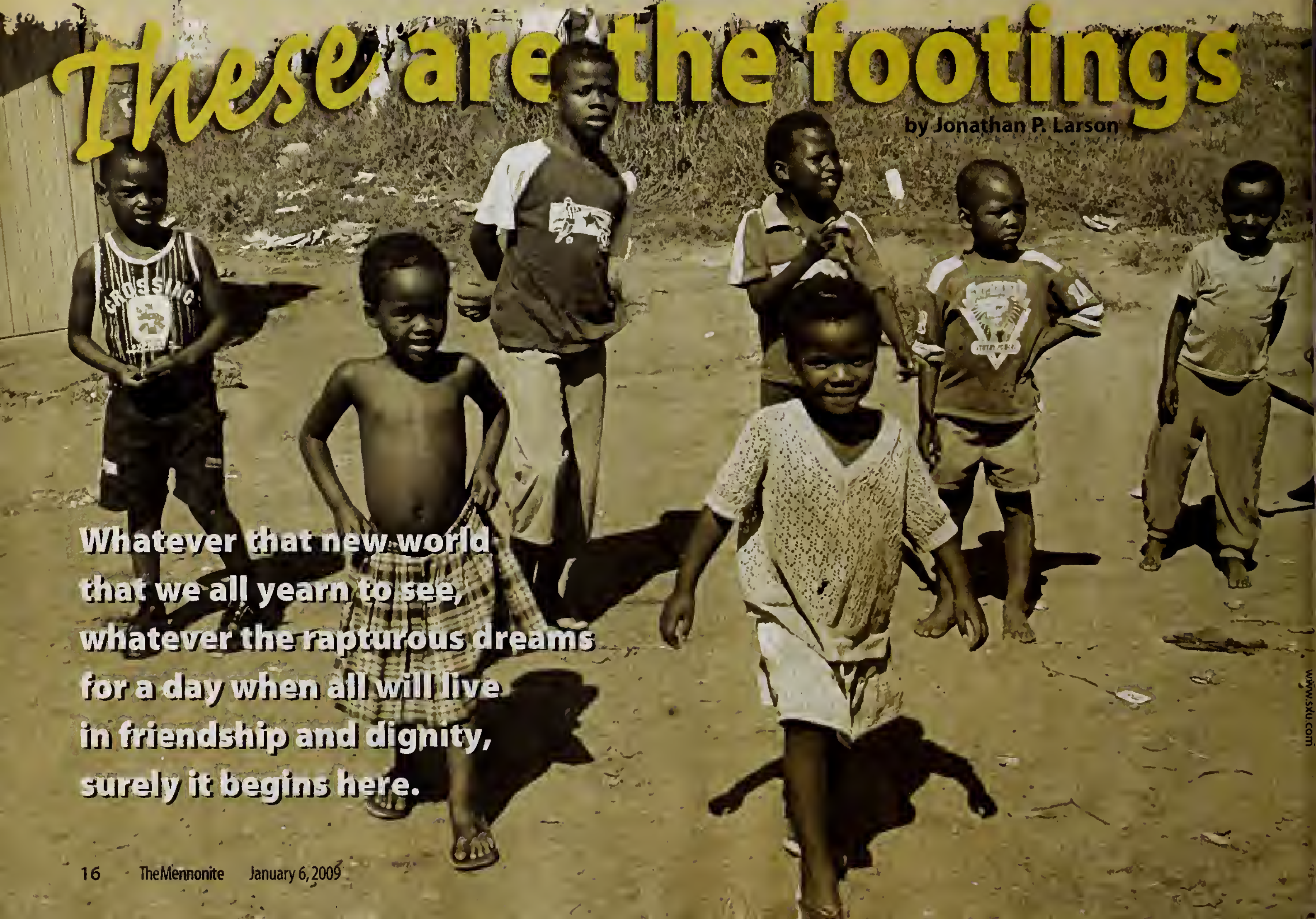
Beyond the open door in a white plastic chair sat the old woman, who made as though to stand to welcome us but could not for the weakness of her left side. She smiled warmly, though, and introduced herself—Mma Phiri (Mrs. Hyena)—as we settled ourselves on the bed that occupied at least half the extraordinarily tidy little room. We inquired after each other's health and families. She insisted, much to my astonishment, as she glanced out the door at the gathering rain clouds, that this would be a good year.

But I suspect it was not the skies she was taking note of. Rather it was the circle of children—of AIDS orphans—who stood outside her door, ranged now around the freshly turned earth of the footings they had already dug to enlarge the old woman's little dwelling. By now they were shouting to summon the neighborhood to come join in some spontaneous singing and dancing.

The guitar was unsheathed, and soon the courtyard was rocking in the brilliant summer sunshine, bare feet pounding rhythms on the courtyard, hands clapping in syncopated time. "Re tsamaya leseding la Modimo" ("We are walking in the light of God"), they sang as they circled the old woman, now settled in a chair under a thorn tree. Nearby children edged into the dancing choir, wanting to be fully part of the good times the old woman had foreseen.

It all came to rest in a quiet circle around the messy footings where the rain water still lingered in muddy puddles. We gazed down into those homely footings as the strains of the last song faded away. Whatever that new world that we all yearn to see, whatever the rapturous dreams for a day when all will live in friendship and dignity, surely it begins here. These are the footings.

Jonathan Larson lives in Gaborone, Botswana.



These are the footings

by Jonathan P. Larson

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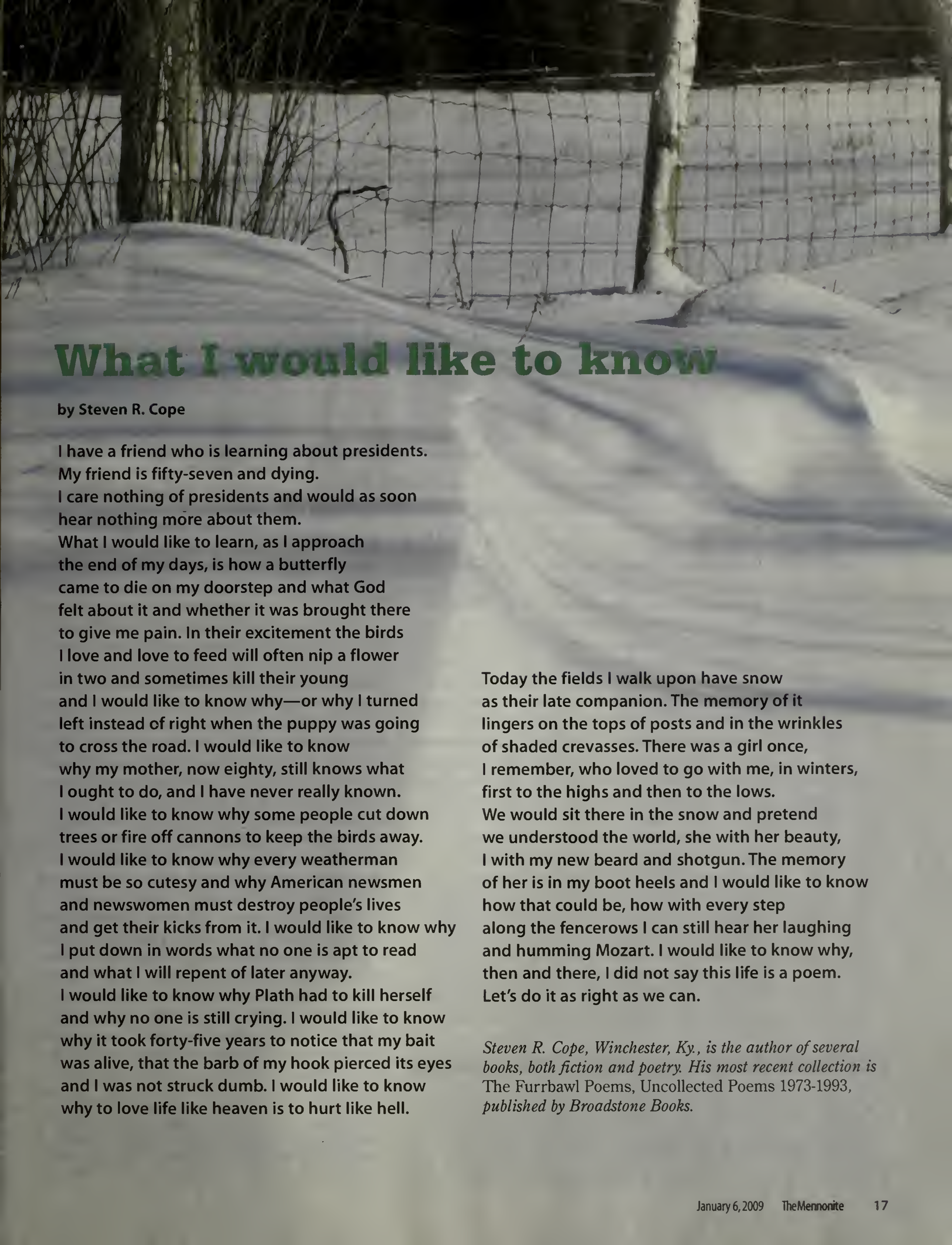


What I would like to know

by Steven R. Cope

I have a friend who is learning about presidents.
My friend is fifty-seven and dying.
I care nothing of presidents and would as soon
hear nothing more about them.
What I would like to learn, as I approach
the end of my days, is how a butterfly
came to die on my doorstep and what God
felt about it and whether it was brought there
to give me pain. In their excitement the birds
I love and love to feed will often nip a flower
in two and sometimes kill their young
and I would like to know why—or why I turned
left instead of right when the puppy was going
to cross the road. I would like to know
why my mother, now eighty, still knows what
I ought to do, and I have never really known.
I would like to know why some people cut down
trees or fire off cannons to keep the birds away.
I would like to know why every weatherman
must be so cutesy and why American newsmen
and newswomen must destroy people's lives
and get their kicks from it. I would like to know why
I put down in words what no one is apt to read
and what I will repent of later anyway.
I would like to know why Plath had to kill herself
and why no one is still crying. I would like to know
why it took forty-five years to notice that my bait
was alive, that the barb of my hook pierced its eyes
and I was not struck dumb. I would like to know
why to love life like heaven is to hurt like hell.
Today the fields I walk upon have snow
as their late companion. The memory of it
lingers on the tops of posts and in the wrinkles
of shaded crevasses. There was a girl once,
I remember, who loved to go with me, in winters,
first to the highs and then to the lows.
We would sit there in the snow and pretend
we understood the world, she with her beauty,
I with my new beard and shotgun. The memory
of her is in my boot heels and I would like to know
how that could be, how with every step
along the fencerows I can still hear her laughing
and humming Mozart. I would like to know why,
then and there, I did not say this life is a poem.
Let's do it as right as we can.

Steven R. Cope, Winchester, Ky., is the author of several books, both fiction and poetry. His most recent collection is The Furrbawl Poems, Uncollected Poems 1973-1993, *published by Broadstone Books.*

A perfect storm for Mennonite colleges

Brad Miller attends First Mennonite Church in Denver.

The financial meltdown is landing devastating blows to college campuses nationwide. The current higher education climate mirrors corporate America as colleges cut programs, mandate hiring freezes and hold tightly to their endowments. Unfortunately, the grip on their endowments is anything but firm. The University of Colorado, Boulder, recently lost $63 million of its endowment, and Harvard University lost $8 billion of its endowment in four months.

The endowments of these institutions were strong to begin with ($750 million and $36.9 billion, respectively), so if they are feeling the effects, imagine what the financial crisis means to Mennonite colleges? Unlike Harvard, Mennonite colleges cannot afford financial losses to their already humble savings. To exacerbate the problem of declining endowments, Mennonite colleges, like most private colleges, rely on tuition generated from student enrollment to meet operating costs. However, according to a study released in December 2008 by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, the average cost of tuition is outpacing family income, which means it will become increasingly difficult for families to afford the cost of a Mennonite college, let alone other colleges. The combination of this financial climate and dwindling enrollments could be a perfect storm for Mennonite colleges.

If we can't financially support five Mennonite colleges, should we support one college with five branch campuses?

As a graduate of two Mennonite colleges (Hesston College '99, Eastern Mennonite University '02), I cringe at the thought of any of our denomination's institutions closing their doors. I credit my time enrolled in Mennonite colleges with helping shape my faith, my values and my worldview as well as providing me with close friends and mentors who are rooted in the Anabaptist tradition. Our Mennonite colleges and seminaries are primary sources for church leadership, so by failing to support our educational institutions we indirectly fail to support the future of our church.

As a young Mennonite and a student of higher education administration, I wish to pose a few questions to the larger Mennonite community:

1. Do we as Mennonites value Mennonite higher education?

2. If we do, then what is the best way to support our colleges during these difficult financial times?

As a former Mennonite college admissions counselor, I can make the case that traditional pipelines of Mennonite students are decreasing in terms of student enrollments and community support. Part of this can be attributed to Mennonites having fewer children, and part of it comes from parents encouraging their children to stay closer to home. Before enrollments drop too low and endowments dissolve, might we begin a public discussion to find ways of supporting our colleges before they are forced to close their doors?

It is difficult to support any college in today's market, which means we must think of creative ways to provide more incentives for our children to attend Mennonite schools (for example, partial student loan forgiveness for every year served with Mennonite Central Committee). On a more controversial note, at what point do we borrow the idea from corporate America of merger and put it to use with our Mennonite colleges? If we can't financially support five Mennonite colleges, should we support one college with five branch campuses? This has obvious practical roadblocks, such as accreditation and alumni outcry, and I fear I'll be accused of institutional treason for even suggesting it. I work for a private college that is asking similar questions of institutional sustainability. Unlike Mennonite colleges, however, it is forced to make these difficult decisions without the support of a faith-based community.

Our Mennonite colleges belong to us, and now more than ever they need our prayers, support and creative thinking. TM

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **A priceless education**—Laurie Oswald Robinson
- **Experiencing new cultures**—Rachel Lapp

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of *The Mennonite*, the board for The Mennonite, Inc., or Mennonite Church USA.

Preach-off raises $2,994 at Dec. 6 event

'Give beer to those who are perishing' text assigned to winning preacher.

Everett Thomas

Goshen College student Penina Acayo opened her sermon with a long pause, then preached from the Revelation 8:1 text, "When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour."

Many young adults want to avoid sermons. But more than 60 went to church on a wintry Saturday evening in Goshen, Ind., to hear seven sermons—and raise enough money to send another young adult delegate to the Global Youth Summit at next July's Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly Gathered in Asunción, Paraguay.

"We're less than $30,000 away from our goal of raising $220,000," said preach-off organizer Jason Shenk at the Dec. 6, 2008, event held at College Mennonite Church, "and $2,500 will cover the costs of one delegate to attend—someone like Etienne Tshibamba, the delegate from … Congo who is just a visa and a plane ticket away from attending."

Delegates such as Tshibamba represent young adults from their national churches; they have surveyed 50 peers in preparing a report on church life in their contexts.

At the Global Youth Summit, young adult delegates will draft a statement on service and discipleship to be presented to the General Council of MWC, their home conferences and other Mennonite leaders around the world.

The preach-off fund-raiser included several ways for participants to contribute to young adult delegate travel. The competition centered on offering baskets set out with one preacher's name on each basket. Whichever basket had the most money determined the winning preacher.

Each preacher was given a random Bible text on which to preach. The sermon could be no longer than five minutes.

Joanne Gallardo won with a total of $416 in her basket. Her assigned text was, "Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those in anguish" (Proverbs 31:6 NIV). Gallardo is a student at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., and is serving as an intern at Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen.

Four judges also provided feedback to each preacher and established quixotic categories for their awards.

Goshen College student Penina Acayo (see photo) won the "Jacob Award" for her wrestling with the text. Reece Retzlaff, a student at AMBS, was awarded the Most Embodied sermon. With a variation on the Peabody Award, AMBS student Rolando Sosa received the "PEA" award for passion, energy and animation.

Steve Wiebe-Johnson was awarded the Best Random Nonverbal sermon. Wiebe-Johnson is Mennonite Mission Network's regional director for Africa. Tyler Yoder, a Goshen College student, won Best Pun-laden Wisdom. Steve Schweitzer, assistant professor of Old Testament at AMBS, won Best Virtual Sermon for his efforts; he presented his sermon electronically due to the inclement weather. Gallardo received an award for having the Most Anabaptist sermon.

Interspersed between the sermons were testimonies from audience members, and North American AMIGOS representative Sarah Thompson auctioned off items of clothing.

The event raised $2,994, according to Shenk. Others wishing to contribute to the fund may send a check made payable to Mennonite World Conference—AMIGOS, c/o Mennonite World Conference, 2529 Willow Ave., Clovis, CA 93612. Supporters may also make donations online at www.mwc-cmm.org (designate the donation for AMIGOS).—*Everett J. Thomas*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

Preachers and assigned sermon texts

- Tyler Yoder: 2 Kings 2:23—He went up from there to Bethel. As he was going up by the way, some youths came out of the city and mocked him, and said to him, "Go up, you baldy! Go up, you baldhead!"
- Rolando Sosa: Proverbs 26:13—The lazy person says, "There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets!"
- Penina Acayo: Revelation 8:1—When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.
- Reece Retzlaff: Isaiah 16:7—Therefore Moab will wail for Moab. Everyone will wail. You will mourn for the raisin cakes of Kir Hareseth, utterly stricken.
- Joanne Gallardo: Proverbs 31:6—Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish.
- Steve Wiebe-Johnson: 2 Kings 9:20—The lookout reported, "He has reached them, but he isn't coming back either. The driving is like that of Jehu son of Nimshi—he drives like a madman."
- Steve Schweitzer: Galatians 6:11—See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!

Western District Conference redefines vision, finds new models for churches

Over the last 30 years, Bergthal Mennonite Church, Pawnee Rock, Kan., suffered the most radical membership decline in Western District Conference (WDC)—without having a church split. Pastor Lynn Schlosser says about 25 people attend on a Sunday morning in a building that holds approximately 300 people.

Schlosser started as pastor in spring 2002 and felt like the church was "in a rut." Bergthal began a visioning process in 2004.

"There was a fear that wasn't named," she says. "Once we named that fear, we were able to go on."

Bergthal members worked through their constitution, came up with a new mission statement, started some new committees and let some committees go.

One advantage of smaller congregations is a "greater freedom to try some new things" as well as the "acceptance that relationships take priority over doctrine or theology," Schlosser says.

"We opened ourselves up to a lot of changes in a short period of time," she says. "We're not a dying congregation; we're a living congregation. We are determined to live for as many years as we have left."

Through this process, Bergthal found its niche, Schlosser says.

"We are a church that is very committed to our relationships with one another," she says. "We are very committed to our peace witness and that takes very many different forms."

Every person who comes and deals with the rural church has to step back and look at the big picture.
—Lou Gomez

Dorothy Nickel Friesen, WDC conference minister, says rural and urban churches face questions of sustainability not only in terms of spirituality but also with jobs, education, food and the economy.

Dorothy Nickel Friesen

"Rural versus urban is just plain wrong," she says. "We have more in common in Mennonite Church USA than differences … we're a richer body because we're 'both and.' "

Nickel Friesen names several new models for churches—urban and rural—facing membership decline: the house church model, community Protestant churches, the "commuting pastor" and a "voluntary service" model in which several people relocate to a community, offering a working and spiritual presence.

But the "community church" model may pose a problem for churches devoted to the peace witness, which is not popular, especially in rural areas, Schlosser says.

Some churches around her congregation have joined together—an option for Bergthal to consider. However, one of the churches strongly supports the military.

"We feel so strongly and rooted in our peace position," she says. "I just don't see that reconciliation happening."

As a last resort, some congregations must close, Nickel Friesen says. The goal is to do that with "all the sensitivity that Hospice uses," she says. "No matter who we are and where we are," she says, "God's not done with us and we're not done with God."

Lou Gomez is an example of a part-time commuting pastor. He lives in Newton, Kan., and is a pastor at Calvary Mennonite Church in Liberal, Kan. Gomez describes the congregation as "our remnant," meaning the people that have stayed and not left for other jobs or moved to nursing homes.

Lou Gomez

Many times, rural churches have survival attitudes—such as, "No one was here when we needed you, so we can do it without you," which is "not always good for growing the church," he says.

Calvary Mennonite Church members are still in discussion on how to increase membership and are considering opening a day-care center to bring in families and younger people.

"For us, it's really a good move in the right direction," he says. "Every person who comes and deals with the rural church has to step back and look at the big picture."

Willmar Harder: Another WDC congregation, Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church, Inman, Kan., is more than 130 years old.

"We've been the old flagship church in the past," says pastor Willmar Harder.

Willmar Harder

Some members remember a choir of 50 people, but now the church has an ensemble of 10 singers. However, 10 years ago there was no ensemble. Hoffnungsau members must stay positive and "celebrate the whole picture," Harder says.

At its 125-year anniversary, the congregation had to rethink

This article is available as a podcast at www.The Mennonite.org

ONLINE

The conference faces shrinking church membership, repopulation issues, economic hardships and sustainability challenges.

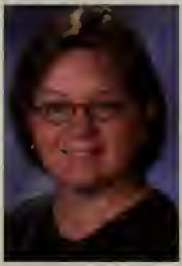
"what it means to be church" and make a list of its visions, Harder says.

One new vision included a preschool at the church. "It addressed the needs of the area," he says.

"Those of us young people realized we will have to step up to the plate," he says, "or we fold shop and go to the bigger churches around."

And there are options. Within a 15-mile radius are 15 Mennonite- and Anabaptist-related churches.

Harder says the church members work to embrace the real numbers and statistics but "realize that God works within the smallness and in unexpected ways."



Susan Jantzen

Susan Jantzen, former interim pastor of Deer Creek (Okla.) Mennonite Church and currently director of ministries at Trinity Heights United Methodist Church, Newton, says, Mennonites must avoid "the tendency to associate size with success. Members in churches that are declining in size have had the opportunity to face and sort through significant issues in the Christian life that members in larger churches may not have had to face."

Jantzen asks, "Is this a time when we can further develop our compassion for other groups that find themselves as cultural minorities who have experienced a change in economic status?"

She names immigrants and Native Americans as examples.

Jantzen says she hopes for more participation from low-number-count congregations in WDC.

"Their spiritual experience and their perspectives are important elements of our conference," she says.—*Anna Groff*

New church models

- House churches
- Community churches
- Commuting pastors
- Voluntary service models

RESOURCES

Lost Sons by Judy Clemens (Herald Press, 2008, $15.99) is a novel that tells the story of Mennonite Clayton Kratz, who disappeared in Russia in 1920.

The Consolations of Theology, edited by Brian S. Rosner (Eerdmans, 2008, $16), shows how theology can be of practical value to every believer.

Into the Dark: Seeing the Sacred in the Top Films of the 21st Century by Craig Detweiler (BakerAcademic, 2008, $18.99) examines 45 films that resonate theologically—from *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy to *Little Miss Sunshine*—offering insight into their scriptural connections and theological applications.

On the Way with Jesus: A Passion for Mission by Richard Showalter (Herald Press, 2008, $16.99) explores the multiple dimensions of Christian mission, offers pointed challenges to mission engagement and encourages the church to enter more fully into its mission both locally and globally.

The Family Song by Jane Hoober Peifer, illustrated by Ingrid Hess (Herald Press, 2008, $18.99), is a whimsical story for children about the friendly Stranowsky family and the song they warble at mealtime, bedtime, anytime. The song reminds us that God is always with us. A CD comes with the book.

All the People in the Bible: An A-Z Guide to the Saints, Scoundrels and Other Characters in Scripture by Richard R. Losch (Eerdmans, 2008, $26) is a comprehensive gathering of all people found in the Bible, including the Apocrypha.

7 Steps to End War and Save the Planet by Steve Ratzlaff (Xlibris, 2008, $19.99) is a pacifist's approach to solving one of the world's most difficult dilemmas, global warming.

Rosanna of the Amish: The Restored Text by Joseph W. Yoder, edited by Julia Spicher Kasdorf and Joshua R. Brown (Herald Press, 2008, $15.99), draws on research to cast the original text as an artifact of religious and ethnic literature.

Giving—The Sacred Art: Creating a Lifestyle of Generosity by Lauren Tyler Wright (SkyLight Paths, 2008, $16.99) helps us locate the balance in our lives so that we can give regularly and without remorse in a way that will enrich our life and, over time, help strengthen society as a whole.

What to Expect When You Have Diabetes: 170 Tips for Living Well with Diabetes by the American Diabetes Association (Good Books, 2008, $9.95) is a reference guide that provides authoritative but brief answers in straightforward language to a range of questions.

What We Believe Together: Exploring the 'Shared Convictions' of Anabaptist-Related Churches by Alfred Neufeld (Good Books, 2008, $9.95) explores seven convictions shared by Anabaptist-related churches, now on six continents, who have always insisted that what they believe will be reflected in how they live.

The Fugitive: Menno Simons by Myron S. Augsburger (Herald Press, 2008, $14.99) is a historical novel that recalls Menno's life, from Catholic priest to radical reformer to hunted fugitive.

Out of This World: A Journey of Healing by Mary Swander (University of Iowa Press, 2008, $19.95) is about a woman who, when a life-threatening allergic illness demanded that she eat only organically grown food, built a new life in a former one-room Iowa schoolhouse in the middle of the largest Amish community west of the Mississippi.

Church learning to transform conflict

Marion Mennonite Church members shred hand-written grudges in service.

Three years ago, Marion Mennonite Church in Shipshewana, Ind., held a special healing service as a way to mark an important turning point in the life of their congregation. The church was emerging from a long episode of conflict that had seemed to afflict every relationship—between members of the congregation, between members and the former pastor and between the congregation and Indiana-Michigan Conference.

After two years of working to resolve the rifts, the congregation was ready to participate in this special service, in which people wrote down grudges they wanted to let go of, carried the slips of paper to the front and deposited them into a shredder.

Sherm Kauffman, who was serving as executive conference minister, issued a formal apology to the congregation on behalf of Indiana-Michigan Conference for hurt feelings, and he and the congregation shared Communion.

"The healing service put a period on the end of that experience of conflict," says Dan Byler, an elder at Marion. "It was as if we were saying, 'We're done with that; let's not forget what we learned, but let's move on.'"

But reaching that point in the healing process took years of dedication, faith and hard work. When Byler started his term as elder at Marion Mennonite in January 2004, he knew that he and the entire congregation were in for some turbulence. Their pastor of about six years had just resigned. Average attendance had dropped from 175 to below 100 within a year. Sharing time during Sunday services was used to air grievances. Morale was so low that few people were willing to take on leadership positions. Dan and fellow brand-new elder Kathy Yoder comprised the entire board of elders when they began their terms at the pastorless church. They knew they had their work more than cut out for them.

Conflict is not just a one-time thing; it's something we all need to keep working through.
—Dan Byler

While the original rift was over pastoral leadership issues, the conflict soon snowballed into people on both sides of the issue feeling like they were not being heard, respected or trusted. The congregation was split between those who supported the pastor and those who didn't, with a sizable number of people who were somewhere in the middle.

The congregation's connection to the conference was strained as well, in part because of two different, unrelated past situations and in part due to the strong feelings around this more recent conflict.

"There were many Sundays I would have much rather stayed home," says Byler.

After the pastor left, the Marion congregation faced the huge yet delicate task of dealing with the conflict and bad feelings and moving toward healing and reconciliation. Dan Miller joined the congregation about five months later to serve as a transitional pastor. The first step he took was to offer sessions on conflict resolution and reconciliation to anyone in the congregation. About 30 people participated, representing between half and two-thirds of the congregation's households.

"Not only did people have the chance to be heard and to work through their feelings of frustration and anger with each other, but we all learned conflict resolution skills, which have been useful since then," says Byler.

The transitional period was a crucial time for the congregation to slowly and gradually experience change. By the time new pastors were installed, Byler says, the congregation felt ready to move on and felt excitement about the future.

"For so long, so much of our time was spent thinking about us and taking care of us," he says. "After the healing service, we started to look outside again, to focus on our mission of reaching out and helping others. Moving forward was a really positive thing."

But one surprise that came after successfully working through such a major conflict is that struggles continue. The most recent disagreement was about rearranging the sanctuary. Instead of the traditional pulpit-in-front and pews-in-rows layout, they decided to try moving the stage area to the side and arranging the pews around it in a half-circle.

"We had strong opinions on each side and needed to process them," says Byler.

They held congregational conversations and set up other venues for people to share their opinions. Byler says they slowed down their decision-making process and listened to everyone who wanted to share his or her perspective, and because of that the congregation was able to come up with an acceptable solution. By the time they finally voted, "the vast majority chose to stay with the new layout," says Byler. "We ended up with something that worked, even if some people preferred the other layout."

"Even after going through everything that we did a few years ago and after working things out, we still have to do it again and again," says Byler. "Conflict is not just a one-time thing; it's something we all need to keep working through."
—Heather Grennan Gary for Gospel Evangel.
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Note: This article originally appeared in the *Gospel Evangel* series called "God's Surprises." *Gospel Evangel* is the newsletter for Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference.

Speakers named for Paraguay 2009

Outgoing and incoming Mennonite World Conference presidents will speak at evening worship services at Assembly Gathered 2009 in Asunción, Paraguay.

Nancy Heisey, current president, will be the keynote speaker at the opening celebration on July 14, and the July 18 service will feature president-elect Danisa Ndlovu. Heisey and Ndlovu will both address the overarching Assembly 15 theme, "Come Together in the Way of Jesus Christ," based on the key assembly biblical text, Philippians 2:1-11.

The events will conclude on July 19 with a mass outdoor rally in Asunción on the theme "On the Way Together; First Stop—Asunción." Alfred Neufeld, Paraguayan theologian, will preach.

Each day will have a morning Bible study and an evening worship service with study leaders and speakers from different regions:

"The Way of Jesus Christ," July 15:
- Morning: Elfriede Verón (Paraguay), who teaches at Instituto Bíblico Asunción—a regional campus of Evangelical University of Paraguay, will speak on Philippians 2:1-11.
- Evening: Nzuzi Mukawa, (Congo), academic dean at the missiology school in Kinshasa, will speak on Micah 6:1-8.

"Uniting in Christ," July 16:
- Morning: Antonio Gonzales (Spain), author and university lecturer, will speak on John 17:16-26.
- Evening: Ditrich Pana (Paraguay), president of the Convención Iglesias Evangélicas Unidas-Enlhet Paraguay, will speak on Acts 2:46-47.

"Serving like Christ," July 17:
- Morning: Jenny Neme (Colombia), director of Conscientious Objection and Peace Building Environments at Justapaz in Bogotá, will speak on Isaiah 58:1-10.
- Evening: Elizabeth Soto (Puerto Rico/USA), coordinator of field education at Lancaster (Pa.) Theological Seminary, will speak on Mark 10:35-45.

"Go together in the way of Jesus Christ," July 18
- Morning: Chris Marshall (New Zealand), associate professor of Christian Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, will speak on Ephesians 4:1-6.—*Mennonite World Conference*

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Maasai leader encourages West Africans

African-to-African initiative provides community development seminars.

Clair Good

David Shunkur (right), joins (left to right) Tenig Mane, Gibby Mane and Lana Dafa, for a lunch of fish.

"All my life I've been waiting and looking for help. I've not found it yet. But when it comes, I'll be OK."

That's what an old village chief told David Shunkur, a director for Compassion International and a Mennonite church leader from Olepolos, Kenya, during transformational community development seminars in The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, Nov. 15-26, 2008.

Shunkur and Clair Good, representative to Africa for Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), facilitated the workshops in West Africa in an African-to-African initiative.

"We, too, were hopeless and helpless—just like you feel," Shunkur told the workshop participants. "We were a community that had lost its way in poverty, corruption, immorality and drunkenness."

Then Shunkur told the story of how Olepolos, his Maasai community in Kenya that once couldn't even feed itself, was now sharing food with others—how they've founded the "Village University" in Olepolos, are planting churches and initiating community transformation in the surrounding regions.

As Shunkur shared the powerful personal and communal transformation stories from Kenya with the West African community leaders, he asked, "Who is going to solve your problems—the mission, the witch doctor, the government? No. Only you can solve your problems."

Shunkur and Good broke the group of about 30 leaders into small working clusters.

The groups, composed of both Christians and African Traditional Religionists from among the Balanta and Jola peoples of Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, worked to identify local problems and assets—and planned how they could leverage the assets to solve their problems.

"I could really see the lights come on," Good says. "They started to get it, to think for themselves and problem solve. It was powerful for them to hear an African say these things, to explain how his community had been transformed from its 'poor me,' poverty mindset."

Good remembers when Shunkur sat in the same hopeless, poverty-stricken state where many of the leaders from Gambia and Guinea-Bissau now sit. And that gives him hope.

Good says he believes that the people in these West African communities of Gambia and Guinea-Bissau have even more assets than the people of Olepolos, Kenya, did when he moved there in 1997.

"It was exciting to see David minister cross-culturally and even eat fish—something the cattle-loving Maasai would never do in Kenya," Good says.

The EMM team in The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau consists of Gary and Denise Williamson, Lori Doll, Krystle Leininger, Eric Weber and Beryl Forrester.—*Jewel Showalter of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

Want to give back?

The Mennonite is accepting donations for the **Prisoners Fund** and the **Overseas Workers Fund.** If you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to either or both, send your donation to *The Mennonite,* 1700 S. Main Street, Goshen, IN 46526. Specify to which fund you are contributing. For more information contact Rebecca Helmuth at **800-790-2498.**

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ITINERARY*
July 12, 2009 . . Overnight flight to Asunción
July 13 . . . . .Asunción
July 14-18 . . . . . . .MWC Assembly Gathered
July 19 . . . . . . Worship/free time in Asunción
July 20 . . . Hospital Mennonita, Iguassu Falls
July 21 . . . . Flight to Lima, Peru
July 22 . . . . Lima and Cuzco
July 23 . . . . . . Cuzco and the "Sacred Valley"
July 24 Machu Picchu "Lost City of the Incas"
July 25 . . . . . . .Free/Machu Picchu (optional)
July 26-27 . . . . Return flight home

Everett Thomas is a veteran of four Mennonite World Conference assemblies and can put your experience with the 2009 Assembly Gathered into the context of the previous 20 years.

*Itinerary is subject to change. For complete details including the tour itinerary, rates and inclusions, please contact:

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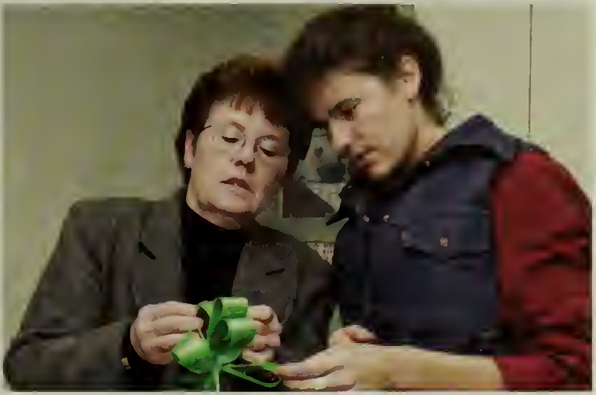
Soup for Success builds relationships



Ryan Miller

Amy Brock (left) teaches Anna Ruth Hershberger to make bows for gift packages at Soup of Success. Brock is a former SOS class member now working full-time at SOS. Hershberger is a Mennonite Voluntary Service volunteer.

Every five months a new group of women graduate from the Soup of Success program equipped with computer skills and business experience—along with new community support.

A job and life skills training program, Soup of Success in Elkhart, Ind., is designed for women working their way out of difficult situations. The relationships built during the program are also important to successful graduates and co-workers such as Amy Brock. Now the production manager at Soup of Success, Brock first came to the program as a participant. After being laid off from her job as a factory supervisor, Brock, a single parent, was looking for something new.

"This was the most supportive, caring and comfortable place I have ever been in my life," says Brock. "The main thing it did was to build my confidence, and to this day my family still tells me it's the best thing I ever did."—*Hannah Heinzekehr of Mennonite Mission Network*

ENTER

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CALENDAR

The second ***Sarasota Mennonite Male Voice Festival*** is being planned for 2009 with **Bahia Vista Mennonite Church** again serving as host on March 1. All men who enjoy singing to God's glory are invited to participate in this thrilling event. Any questions may be addressed to: Paul Wenger; pwenger4@comcast.net; 941-870-3737.

A representative of Eastern Mennonite University will be giving a message and talking about the school on Feb. 15 at 6 p.m. at **Oak Grove's Youth Gathering**. Oak Grove is located at 1525 Mennonite Church Road; West Liberty, OH 43357. This all-ages event is open to the public. For more information contact Pastor Mark at 937-465-4749 or by email at youthpastor@yccm.net.

WORKERS

Aeschliman, Quinn, was licensed as associate pastor at Cedar Grove Mennonite Church, Greencastle, Pa., on Oct. 12, 2008.

Aklog, Yilma, was licensed as pastor and church planter at Ebenezer Evangelical Mennonite Church, Baltimore, Md., on Oct. 4, 2008.

Aynekulu, Asbedingel, ended his assignment as associate pastor at Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Lancaster, Lancaster, Pa., on Oct. 31, 2008.

Blosser, Gary, was installed as pastor at Hope Community Church, Fleetwood, Pa., on Oct. 5, 2008.

Calkins, W. Scott, was ordained as pastor and church planter at Covenant Mennonite Church and Pax Ministries, Elkton, Md., on Nov. 16, 2008.

Gascho-Cooke, Susan, continues in ministry as chaplain at Grady Memorial Hospital, Atlanta, Ga.

Haupert, Stephen A., resigned from his role as overseer of the North Penn District of Lancaster Mennonite Conference and transferred his credential to New Testament Fellowship of Anabaptist/Mennonite Churches on Nov. 19, 2008.

Henderson, Marilyn, was installed as pastor at Hebron Mennonite Church, Hagerstown, Md., on Nov. 16, 2008.

Hershberger, Dan and Nicole, Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., began a three-year voluntary service term in Bammental, Germany, in August 2008. Dan is working as a GI right counselor with the Military Counseling Network, a part of the German Mennonite peace witness.

Hess, Marshall, ended his assignment as deacon at New Danville Mennonite Church, New Danville, Pa., on June 30, 2008.

Jarrett, Elizabeth "Beth," was ordained as associate pastor at Neffsville Mennonite Church, Lititz, Pa., on Sept. 21, 2008.

Kauffman, Glenn R., was installed as bishop/overseer of the Washington-Baltimore District of Lancaster Mennonite Conference on Oct. 19, 2008.

Koontz, Gary, was licensed for special ministry at Crest Hill Community Church, Wardensville, W.V., on Nov. 9, 2008, for evangelism and teaching ministry.

Linsenmeyer, Bek, was installed as pastor to young families at North Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on Nov. 23, 2008.

Miller, J. Brian, was ordained as lead pastor at Sunnyside Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Oct. 12, 2008.

Miller, Mervin, was installed as pastor at Lake Bethel Mennonite Church, LaGrange, Ind., on Nov. 23, 2008.

Nafziger, Izaete, was installed as minister of outreach at North Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on Nov. 23, 2008.

Siemens-Rhodes, Heidi, was licensed as co-pastor at Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on Nov. 30, 2008.

Wittrig, Jerry, was installed as minister of visitation at North Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on Nov. 23, 2008.

Yoder, Daniel, ended a term as associate pastor of youth and young adults at First Mennonite Church, Middlebury, Ind., on Nov. 30, 2008.

Zeiset, Frederick J., was licensed as youth pastor at Elizabethtown Mennonite Church, Elizabethtown, Pa., on Oct. 19, 2008.

Zeiset, Samuel W., retired from his role of counselor with Marriage Encounter on Oct. 31, 2008

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Alexander, Hazel Bethesda, Oct. 15, 2008, to Reuben and Tammy Hochstedler Alexander, Washington, D.C.

Baumgartner, Alexander Charles, Nov. 6, 2008, to Sam and Carla Byler Baumgartner, Belleville, Pa.

Brubaker, Thatcher James, Dec. 4, 2008, to Daryl and Rebekah Kratz Brubaker, Harrisonburg, Va.

Burkholder, Elsa Hertzler, Nov. 30, 2008, to Alan and Susan Hertzler Burkholder, Denver, Colo.

Friesen, Jesse Erick Sawatzky, Nov. 19, 2008, to Reynold Friesen and Tammy Sawatzky, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Kropf, Keen Hostetter, Nov. 18, 2008, to Jesse and Marla Hostetter Kropf, Denver, Colo.

Leatherman, Michael Darren, Dec. 5, 2008, to Michael and Carmen Ingalls Leatherman, Pennsburg, Pa.

Lehman, Grace Noelle, Nov. 25, 2008, to Kent and Kim Ropp Lehman, Kalona, Iowa.

Maust, Benjamin Bjorn, Nov. 21, 2008, to Brian Maust and Ingrid Olson, Goshen, Ind.

Miller, Whitney Layne, Nov. 18, 2008, to Dustin and Megan Popp Miller, Hutchinson, Kan.

Noll, Ethan David, Nov. 5, 2008, to Chris and Katie Boshart Noll, Mount Crawford, Va.

Rothshank, Layton Beatty, Nov. 7, 2008, to Justin and Brooke Rothshank, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Rush, Bethany Joy, Dec. 1, 2008, to David and Julette Lehman Rush, Harrisonburg, Va.

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Young, Eli Thomas, Nov. 20, 2008, to David and Stacey Goering Young, Wichita, Kan.

Zuercher, Branson Isaac, Dec. 8, 2008, to Brian and Stacie Crilow Zuercher, Wooster, Ohio.

MARRIAGES

Dreese/Geckle: Dan Dreese, Williamsport, Pa., and Amber Geckle, Belleville, Pa., Oct. 11, 2008, at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

Richard/Schrader: Joel Richard, Goshen, Ind., and Jami Schrader, Fort Wayne, Ind., Nov. 29, 2008, at Taylor Chapel Methodist Church, Fort Wayne.

Simmering/Walters: Katie Simmering, Hesston, Kan., and Phil Walters, Erie, Kan., Nov. 22, 2008, at Hesston Mennonite Church.

DEATHS

Brenneman, Eva Lavern Yoder, 88, Kalona, Iowa, died Nov. 25, 2008. Spouse: Elwyn Brenneman (deceased). Parents: Eli and Esther Brenneman Yoder. Children: Jeanette Bulechek, Charlene Mullet, Larry, Debbie Birky; 14 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 29 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Brydge, Rachel Ellinger, 93, Lyndhurst, Va., died Dec. 4, 2008, following an extended illness. Spouse: Silas W. Brydge. Children: Leonard Lee, Karen Joy Hodge; two grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 9 at Riverview Cemetery, Waynesboro, Va.

Fisher, Lowell Robert, 50, South Bend, Ind., died Nov. 22, 2008, of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. Parents: Robert David and Rachel Swartzendruber Fisher. Child: Matthew. Funeral: Nov. 26 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Garber, Mary Anne Ruhl, 65, Ronks, Pa., died Nov. 22, 2008, of injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Spouse: Paul L. Garber. Parents: J. Robert Ruhl and Ruth Buckwalter Weaver. Child: Dawn Darling. Funeral: Nov. 26 at Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

Marner, Eunice Lenore Reber, 93, Wellman, Iowa, Nov. 2, 2008. Spouse: Ora Marner. Parents: George and Sarah Kreider Reber. Children: James, Merle Miller; eight grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 6 at Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.

Mast, Jeffrey Lee, 62, Walnut Creek, Ohio, died Dec. 8, 2008. Parents: Gerald O. and Frances L. Miller Mast. Funeral: Dec. 13 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church.

Miller, Enos Hugh, 98, Wellman, Iowa, died Dec. 13, 2008. Spouse: Erma Pauline Doolin Miller (deceased). Parents: Harvey J. and Lizzie Yoder Miller. Children: S. Duane, E. Gene, Ermadine Boshart, L. Dale, Dean, Janice Blosser, Elaine Earnest; 22 grandchildren; 32 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 16 at Wellman Mennonite Church.

Moyer, Evelyn Derstine, 89, Lansdale, Pa., died Dec. 13, 2008. Spouse: Nelson D. Moyer (deceased). Parents: William A. and Ella A. Derstine Derstine. Children: John D., Robert D., Karen D. Weaver; eight grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 18 at Dock Woods Community, Lansdale.

Mullet, LeRoy, 67, Berlin, Ohio, died Nov. 25, 2008, of a heart condition. Spouse: Sue Slabach Mullet. Parents: Atlee and Sue Mullet. Children: Steve, Tony; four grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 1 at Martins Creek Mennonite Church, Millersburg, Ohio.

Nelson, Boyd Harold, 89, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 18, 2008, of heart failure. Spouse: Welma Barbara Graber Nelson (deceased). Parents: Benjamin H. and Fern Mae Everett Nelson. Children: Barbara Gingerich, Ben H., Paul J.; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 22 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Nickel, Alvina B. Becker, 99, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 9, 2008, following a fall. Spouse: Peter J. Nickel (deceased). Parents: Jacob B. and Elizabeth Unruh Becker. Children: Carol Nickel, Eileen Stadtlander, Lynette Wilson, Twila Nickel; seven grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 15 at Sermon on the Mount Chapel at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

Reschly, Willard Leroy, 84, Washington, Iowa, died Oct. 31, 2008. Spouse: Leona Dusenberry Reschly. Parents: Harry and Fannie Conrad Reschly. Children: Linda Simmons, Lonnie, Terry; seven grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 4 at Beatty Funeral Home, Washington.

Sala, Romaine Stahl, 83, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 6, 2008. Spouse: Ray Sala. Parents: Ira and Nora Kaufman Stahl. Funeral: Nov. 21 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Slagel, Warren E., 87, Wayland, Iowa, Nov. 19, 2008. Spouse: Vernelda Widmer Slagel (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Sarah Conrad Slagel. Children: Eric, Wendy Scarff, Kelly; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 22 at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland.

Stoltzfus, Ruth Wenger Brunk, 93, Harrisonburg, Va., died Dec. 2, 2008. Spouse: Grant M. Stoltzfus (deceased). Parents: George R. and Katie Wenger Brunk. Children: Eugene, Kathryn Stoltzfus Fairfield, Ruth Stoltzfus Jost, Helen Greenberg Stoltzfus; 11 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 6 at Park View Mennonite Church.

Stuckey, Pearl Stuckey, 87, Archbold, Ohio, died Nov. 29, 2008. Spouse: Chauncey Stuckey (deceased). Parents: William and Leah Stuckey. Children: Richard, Larry; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Dec. 2 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Thiessen, Matilda J. Duerksen, 82, Butterfield, Minn., died Dec. 11, 2008, of Parkinson's disease. Spouse: Albert David Thiessen. Parents: John H. and Marie Krahn Duerksen. Children: Ivan, Darwin, Lauren; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 15 at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, Minn.

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

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First Mennonite Church, Indianapolis, seeks ***full-time associate pastor of youth ministries and pastoral care***. Start date February 2009 or later; job description at www.indymenno.org. We are an Equal Opportunity Employer. Please contact IN-MI Mennonite Conference minister Nancy Kauffmann; nancy@im.mennonite.net.

Western Mennonite School seeks a ***director of advancement*** to lead the advancement team and support the future growth of Western's mission. Responsibilities include: building community relationships, directing annual and long-range planning, directing and implementing fund-raising efforts and promoting Christ-centered education from a Mennonite faith perspective. Western offers Christ-centered education for grades 6-12 and is located on 45 beautiful acres outside Salem in the Willamette Valley of the Pacific Northwest. Position will remain open until filled. Contact Darrel Camp, 866-343-9378, or dcamp@westernmennoniteschool.org.

Bahia Vista Mennonite Church, Sarasota, Fla., is seeking a ***full-time lead pastor*** that is a team builder and possesses the gift of empowering others. The congregation desires a person who is deeply rooted in biblical teachings and is a committed Anabaptist with some prior pastoral experience. The successful candidate will be visionary and forward thinking and willing to process ideas and listen to others. Bahia Vista is a year-round congregation of 250+ people, but in the winter season that number may quadruple. For any questions or to notify of intent for candidacy, please contact Gene Yoder, Church Administrator and Transition Team Chair, at genebvmenno@comcast.net, or call 941-377-4041 (church), or 941-993-8487 (cell), or write to the church at 4041 Bahia Vista St., Sarasota, FL 34232.

The Mennonite Heritage Cruise and its international resource team invite you to join the ***15th annual cruise in Ukraine on the Dnieper River and Black Sea*** in late September 2009. This has been the ultimate 15-day roots discovery experience for 2,500 descendants of Russian Mennonites and others. For details of the cruise Google "Mennonite Heritage Cruise" or phone Marina Unger 800-387-1488, ext. 2827.

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MMA has an opening for a director of brokered products to provide leadership in building and managing the full shelf of insurance and investment brokered products required to serve members. Qualified applicants will have a college degree or equivalent management experience within the industry; successful experience in insurance sales and/or financial planning, professional credentials, or willingness to obtain, preferred (i.e. CFP, CLU, ChFC, securities licenses).

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Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster seeks ***half-time director of children and youth programs***. Application information and job description at www.communitymennonite.org or 717-392-7567.

Bethel Mennonite Church of West Liberty, Ohio, seeks applicants for our ***half-time youth pastor position***. Successful candidates will be committed to the way of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures, with a heart for youth and a commitment to Anabaptist theology and practice. Interested applicants may submit their MLI or direct questions to Pastor Dave Maurer at bethelpastor@2access.net or call 937-465-4587.

Eastern Mennonite University is seeking qualified applicants for a ***full-time, continuing faculty position in counselor education, with expertise in mental health counseling***. This position is responsible for teaching graduate level counseling courses, student advising, university service and ongoing professional experience/scholarship. Earned doctorate in counselor education or a closely related discipline with an equivalent of three years of clinical counseling experience. Experience in Graduate teaching and Virginia licensure or licensure eligibility is a must. Salary and rank determined by education and experience. Nine-month contract. EMU uses an extended-contract system. Position begins August 2009. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, official transcripts and three reference letters to: glanzerd@emu.edu. For more information visit our Web site at www.emu.edu. People who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Mountville Mennonite Church (Lancaster Mennonite Conference) seeking ***full-time associate pastor for youth ministry*** with training or experience in youth ministry and discipleship, commitment to Anabaptist core values and a passion for reaching unchurched youth. Starting summer 2009. Applications requested by March 1. Contact: Jim Herr jcjbc5@aol.com; 717-285-2153.

Hesston College seeks applicants for a ***head women's softball coach***. As a part of the athletic department, the person in this part-time position will be responsible for all aspects of the softball program, including recruiting, scheduling, managing a budget, travel arrangements, etc. Qualifications include experience and knowledge of fast-pitch softball, the ability to teach the skills and strategy of the game to college student-athletes, recruiting skills, love for students and commitment to Mennonite higher education. This position will be open with duties commencing February 2009 and continuing into the 2009-10 school year and beyond. Review of applications begins immediately and continues until the position is filled. To apply, send resumé, application and faith statement as found at www.hesston.edu/employment to Art Mullet, Athletic Director, Box 3000, Hesston, Kan. 67062. EOE

Vineland United Mennonite Church invites applications for the full-time position of ***lead minister***. We are a congregation of 220 active members located in a growing semirural community in the heart of the Niagara Peninsula. Our church is seeking a transformational pastor to assist our congregation in implementing our vision for the future. The successful candidate will be committed to an Anabaptist understanding of faith and theology, deeply rooted in biblical teaching, a strong preacher and willing to work as part of the leadership team. Candidates should have previous pastoral experience and possess a desire to foster local outreach. Please submit inquiries, resumés and references to: Vineland United Mennonite Church, 3327 Menno St., Vineland, ON L0R 2C0, Attn: Mike Hendriks; or email mkhendriks@sympatico.ca.

A call to prayer:

Following Jesus in a world that is not

Un llamado a la oración:

Seguir a Jesús en un mundo que no lo sigue

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. (Ephesians 3:20)

Fellow members of Mennonite Church USA congregations, in the name of Jesus, I give you greetings and extend to you a call to prayer.

Delegates gathered at San José 2007 passed an important resolution about our national identity as Mennonite Christians in the United States. Delegates asked the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board to help the church explore our identity as followers of Jesus living in this country. A task force has helped give shape to a process that can involve congregations.

We are greatly blessed to live in the United States. And yet we are also confronted with the challenge to be faithful in following Jesus in a world that is not. In the shifting culture around us, we are forgetting whose we are.

We are collaborating with *The Mennonite* to produce a special issue next February that will be designed for congregational study. Your responses will be part of delegate discussion, learning, confession and prayer at the delegate assembly in Columbus next summer. A young adult drama team will be available to work with conferences and congregations for the months after the assembly.

We ask for your prayers that these resources are developed and used to help all of us think more carefully about who we are and what God wants us to become. Look for more information soon.

Y a Aquel que es poderoso para hacer todas las cosas mucho más abundantemente de lo que pedimos o entendemos, según el poder que actúa en nosotros. (Efesios 3:20)

Hermanos miembros de las congregaciones de la Iglesia Menonita USA, en nombre de Jesús los saludo y les envío este llamado a la oración.

Los delegados en San José 2007 aprobaron una importante resolución sobre nuestra identidad nacional como cristianos menonitas en Estados Unidos. Ellos le pidieron a la junta directiva de la Iglesia Menonita USA que ayudaran a la iglesia a explorar nuestra identidad como seguidores de Jesús en este país. Un grupo de trabajo ha ayudado a darle forma a un proceso que puede incluir a las congregaciones.

Es una gran bendición para nosotros vivir en Estados Unidos. A la vez, se nos presenta el desafío de seguir fielmente a Jesús en un mundo que no lo sigue. En la cambiante cultura que nos rodea, olvidamos a quién pertenecemos.

Estamos colaborando con *The Mennonite (El Menonita)* en la producción una edición especial en febrero que será diseñada para el estudio en la congregación. Sus respuestas formarán parte de la discusión, aprendizaje, confesión y oraciones de los delegados durante la asamblea de los mismos en Columbus el verano próximo. Un grupo de teatro de jóvenes adultos se ofrecerá para trabajar con las conferencias y congregaciones en los meses posteriores a la convención.

Les pedimos que oren para que estos recursos se desarrollen y se utilicen con el fin de ayudarnos a todos a pensar más detenidamente quiénes somos y qué quiere Dios de nosotros. Estén pendientes de la información que pronto circularemos.

With abundant hope – con abundante esperanza,

Terry Shue

Terry Shue, Pastor, Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church

(member of Executive Board and national identity task group)
(miembro de la Junta Directiva y el grupo de trabajo por la identidad nacional)

Mennonite Church USA

Iglesia Menonita EUA

Creating space, with cosmic dimensions

Sara Wenger Shenk is an author and serves as associate dean and associate professor of Christian practices at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.

As the dark days of winter close in around us, the festive lights spring up on window sills, along porch rails and eaves. Candles festoon our tables and spaces of worship. Fires glow in our fireplaces and woodstoves. We light up the dark corners of our cold, wintry world, making space for warmth, conviviality and worship.

I've long been drawn to reflect on what it means to create space—to imagine how particular rooms can be arranged for comfort and beauty—but even more to create the kind of emotional space where people feel safe and relationships thrive. Creating space is a poetic metaphor with cosmic dimensions.

As a young mother at home with children, I resented it that others might think of me as "just a homemaker," and I sought in some of my early writing to define that daily work on my own terms. For much of my life, I have chosen to live into the multilayered, many-splendored dimensions of what it means to be a homemaker—as a mother but also as a pastor, a seminary administrator and a professor. Several years ago, I was grateful to discover the way Princeton professor Carol Lakey Hess described qualities characteristic of women leaders in her book *Caretakers for our Common House* (Abingdon Press, 1997). She likened leadership of churches and institutions to the qualities needed to manage a just, loving and empowering household.

There are many ways men and women work to create spaces where people can thrive. I'm fascinated by the architects I know who can design structures that open into spaces large enough for festive gatherings and enclose spaces secure enough for safety and intimacy. Friends I know invest body and soul in the construction business, building comfortable and environmentally friendly houses. And I know people who have a knack for arranging furniture and decor with stunning beauty—wall hangings, curtains, cushions, tapestries that vividly express the personality and ethos of a household or family.

I'm only moderately good at working with the physical stuff of homemaking, but what I love most is creating hospitable space where family, friends, students, colleagues and our church family can come alive to each other, to God's world and to the Spirit.

I love watching students in the seminary community find their voice as they discover it is safe to express their real fears, disappointments and longings. Parker Palmer describes how a "learning space needs to be hospitable not to make learning painless but to make the painful things possible." I was struck by how often students picked up on this theme this past semester in their written and oral discussions of Palmer's reflection on "education as a spiritual journey." It obviously struck a chord in their spirits that our calling is to create hospitable spaces to welcome each other—our struggles, regrets, failures, fledgling visions—spaces that free us to be real with each other.

I love creating space for our church family to gather round our tables. Last Sunday some 30 did so again, a frequent move from the public worship space to one of our homes for delighting in hearty food and fellowship, building community connections.

When our son and daughter-in-law recently returned from a long sojourn in south central Asia, I loved going to their apartment before their arrival, filling the refrigerator with food, hanging new curtains, making the bed with fresh linens, choosing some seasonal flowers and breakfast breads to say "welcome home" as soon as they walked in the door.

For a long time, I've loved what Lutheran pastor and author Walter Wangerin writes about homemaking. His mother, he says, was a priest, and cleaning was her sacramental ritual. "My mother kept cleaning, kept reclaiming territory by the act of cleaning it, kept redeeming her children therein," he writes.

Wangerin writes that his mother's feats persuaded him that "everything old and fusty could be eliminated … or, better yet, the old itself could be the new again." Because of her priestly toil to make "my infant world a clean, well-lighted place," he writes, "now … in spite of wretched evidence to the contrary, I continue to trust in the ultimate purity of God's universe. … Now, therefore, I trust renewal. Resurrection. Easter."

"Never, never," he writes, "should children take so cosmic a gift for granted."

In this season when lights brighten many dark corners, I like to think of candle lighting, tree decorating, the lamp's reflection in a mirror radiating Epiphany's good news for all the world's people as priestly sacraments with cosmic dimensions. Men and women, whether or not we're aware when we string lights around or build up the fire, are showing that we can push back darkness with light, sadness with joy, grimness with goodness, greed with generosity—celebrating the newborn king: a cosmic gift for sure. TM

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Everett J. Thomas

A falling tide

President John F. Kennedy gets credit for the aphorism usually applied to economics, "A rising tide lifts all boats." As a sailor, Kennedy would also have known that an ebb (falling) tide also lowers all boats. If the tide drops enough, a multimillion-dollar yacht is just as stuck as a rowboat.

The U.S. economic recession is still somewhat uneven; some of our congregations are in areas where economic activity continues at a moderate pace. But other parts of our church are hurting. In Elkhart (Ind.) County, where I live, the credit crisis has devastated many manufacturers of recreational vehicles; our county leads the state with an unemployment rate now nearly 12 percent.

Daily we hear stories of food pantries in the region running out of supplies. The interchurch ministry for homeless families in our town expanded its capacity by 40 percent and still has to turn families away. The local ministerial association has little money left in the fund that provides help for the needy.

While this is a shock to most of us in the region, some members in Mennonite Church USA's Western District have been living with decline for years (see page 20). Their spiritual vitality in the midst of the region's depopulation can be be an example to all of as we confront worsening economic news.

As the tide falls, we become preoccupied with hitting bottom. But it will be much worse for others around the world.

Some economists are warning that 2009 will be even more challenging than 2008. If that is the case, we may be tempted into a siege mentality in our congregations. We may focus on maintaining programs and first covering the costs of "being the church." As the tide falls, we become preoccupied with hitting bottom.

But it will be much worse for others around the world. Mennonite Central Committee, the conduit through which flows much of our support for others less fortunate, sounded the alarm in a recent news release. MCC U.S. director Rolando Santiago said he projects a budget shortfall of approximately 5 percent in 2009. MCC's international budget is also facing a shortfall that may require the use of its rainy day fund. These reductions are caused by the declining value of the Canadian dollar, lower returns on investments and a projected decline in contributions.

This is all the more startling since MCC was saying just six months ago it had more money than staff. "We are cash rich and people poor," said one board member at MCC's annual meeting last June.

MCC's finances are a kind of bellwether; they indicate the level of compassion we have for others less fortunate around the world. If the tide falls further in 2009, then our support for relief and service programs will be incrementally more important.

Since Mennonite Church USA will observe Stewardship Sunday on Jan. 18, this is a good time to plan our giving—both household and congregational—for the new year. Here are two suggestions:

- Commit to giving—as a family or as an individual—1 percent more of your 2009 income than the percentage of 2008 income given to church and charitable causes.
- As a congregation, commit to giving 1 percent more of your 2009 spending plan than the percentage given outside your congregation in 2008.

The good news is that the tide does not ebb forever. At some point it will turn and begin to fill in around our boats sitting on the rocks. We are all in this cycle together, and we can make the struggle easier for ourselves and others by caring for our "neighbors" around the world as much or more than we care for ourselves.

The worsening global economic crisis will cause many of us to look first after our personal well-being. But Jesus says we are to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves. These tough times remind us about the way we should live all the time, no matter which way the tide flows.—*ejt*

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Individual and community salvation

B. Elaine Bryant is prayer coordinator for Illinois Mennonite Conference.

One evening, two prayer partners and I prayed for wisdom and help about knowing what to do when there's "sin in the camp" that leads to defeat by our adversaries, such as the Israelites under Joshua experienced (7:10-12). We prayed in the face of concern about what seemed to be an increasing bondage to carnality and satanic strongholds and destructive, body-maiming attacks in and on faith communities, ethnic communities, the nation and around the world. We acknowledged we didn't know what to do about the many threats to life and challenges to peaceful relationships.

"Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," came to mind when we asked, What, Lord, would you have me do? After several hours of meditating on Scripture, I was led to 2 Chronicles 20, where those recurring words are written.

King Jehoshaphat said to God, "We have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us, nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon you" (vs. 12). Later "the Spirit of the Lord" gave words that provided answers to our evening prayers for wisdom. The Lord generated faith to believe the promise of salvation and obey the instructions to stand still.

The faith-generating words through Jehaziel in part were, "Do not be afraid nor dismayed, because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. ... You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. ... Do not fear or be dismayed ... for the Lord is with you." The last six words were a glad reminder of my understanding of God as Emmanuel (God-with-us), not only in the sense of being present but as being for us rather than against us.

In response to those six words and my desire to worship, as Jehoshaphat did, words from the prophet Isaiah (12:2) in the form of a song arose unbidden: "Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid ... the Lord is my strength and song. He also has become my salvation."

The Holy Spirit-generated declaration of that verse gave peace and is an appropriate truth for present-day disciples of the Lord Jesus to embrace and trust, because he commanded his disciples not to let their "hearts be troubled or afraid" (John 14:27). It is a significant declaration in relationship to individual or national salvation from the multitude of threats and challenges that we face at this time in history.

We can ask in his name for forgiveness for ourselves or others, for wisdom to facilitate deliverance and for fulfillment of the words about being led in the triumph that the apostle Paul wrote of in 2 Corinthians 2:14. We can trust for each, because the Lord said, "Whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name I will do it" (John14:13-14). "Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you ... that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24). As one who claims that "Jesus is Lord," can I do less than take his words seriously and believe what he said?

Another truth about the grace of God-with-us, through the Lord Jesus for our peace and salvation, has import for individuals, groups and nations. However, that truth is a conditional promise. The Lord said, "If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

I pray that all who have received him will be helped day-by-day and in times of need to remember, trust and abide in his liberating words. TM

TheMennonite

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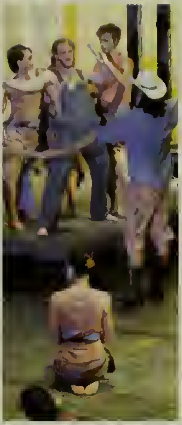

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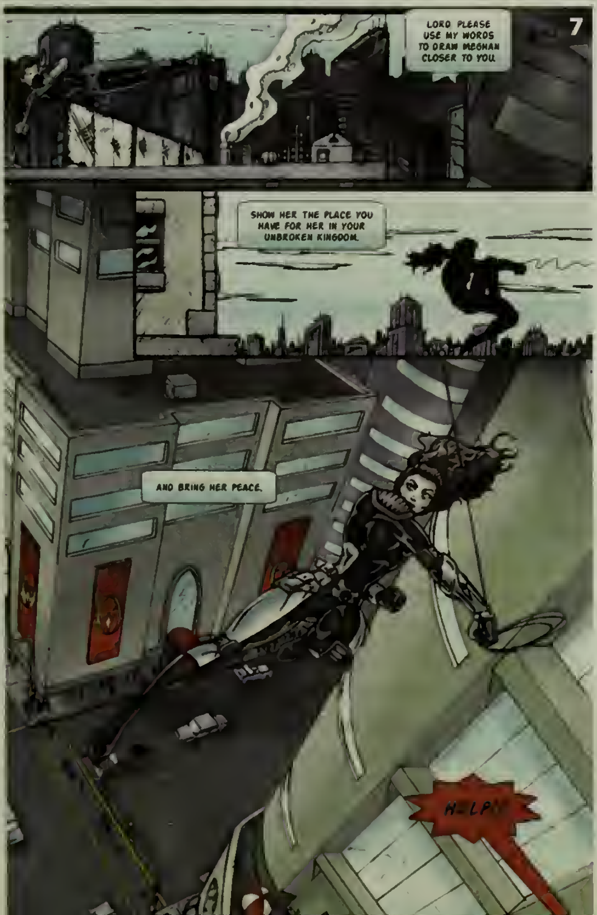
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LORD PLEASE USE MY WORDS TO DRAW MEGHAN CLOSER TO YOU.
SHOW HER THE PLACE YOU HAVE FOR HER IN YOUR UNBROKEN KINGDOM.
AND BRING HER PEACE.
HELP!

Cover: Eastern Mennonite Seminary students have opportunity to deepen their spiritual life through chapel, formation classes and small groups. Photographer: Justin Roth, EMU

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Pregnant with God

I was moved by the evocative eloquence of Isaac Villegas' "Pregnant with God" in the Dec. 16, 2008, Grace and Truth column (especially as my cousin is one of the new mothers he highlights). I strongly affirm Villegas' valorization of Mary as a model disciple yet felt his telling of her story neglected key dimensions of the Gospel accounts. He stressed, "Mary reveals the passive power of surrender to God." Yet it is hard to reconcile his assertions that "the silent presence of Mary whispers the secret of discipleship" or that "she does not seize opportunities to change the world" with the noisy—and downright revolutionary—proclamations found in Mary's Song.

Mary's fearless challenges to the Powers That Were are just the kind of thing that got her son killed; I guess the apple didn't fall far from the tree. And while Mary may "sit with the humble," I get a different vibe from her strong-willed opposition to Jesus' early ministry. Momma Mary had her own mind and wasn't afraid to give Jesus a piece of it.

Still, Mary had the guts to admit she was wrong and join the movement: As Villegas notes, she is at her son's side through the terror of the Passion. She survives that harrowing test of mettle and is still standing at Pentecost, where she (again) helps "birth" the church, this time as a battle-tested elder, not a pondering teen.

Reconsidering the keynote highlighted by Villegas (Mary's consent to God's pregnancy plan), I don't find anything passive about it. Unlike Hebrew heroes of old, such as Moses, Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah, little Mary doesn't even blink when addressed by the Most High. She audaciously agrees to partner with God despite being neck-deep in a scandal that would seemingly wreck her life. Now that's what I call "girl power." *—Kent Davis Sensenig, Harrisonburg, Va.*

IN THIS ISSUE

Mennonite schooling is the single largest enterprise in Mennonite Church USA—if all the budgets were aggregated and employment numbers combined. In recent years, the rationale for Mennonite schools has expanded. While we know that Mennonite children who attend Mennonite schools are more likely to participate in service assignments and remain in the church as adults, Mennonite Education Agency's executive director Carlos Romero points out that our schools are also centers of missional activity (page 18). "Across the many levels of Mennonite education," Romero says, "our institutions serve students from a variety of faiths, backgrounds and nationalities." To keep this important part of our church in our minds, hearts and prayers, we once again publish the annual Mennonite education issue. We are grateful to MEA staff for providing the articles and photos. The material includes some important new information about education for racial-ethnic leaders (page 15).—*Editor*

Is Christianity about IQ?

I much appreciated Karen Smucker's article "Is Christianity About IQ?" in the Dec 2, 2008, issue. As the director of a residential program serving adults with developmental disabilities, I am concerned about the disproportionately high number of families who have a family member with a disability who are not part of any faith community. As people who are the hands and feet of Jesus on this earth, we need to take intentional steps to encourage people who are "different" to feel like they belong in our churches. A Lutheran pastor with whom I shared Karen's article responded with this comment, "All churches need to get the legalisms out of the way of God's grace." Amen.—*Karen Litwiller, Oregon Mennonite Residential Services, McMinnville, Ore.*

Rescind Executive Board request

I am glad *The Mennonite* has accepted publishing an occasional "Mennonite Church USA" column by Jim Schrag, informing us as a church about the activities and actions of his executive office, the executive committee and the Executive Board. This can function as an essential part of a needed dialogue in our ongoing journey as a people, where we, the members, can affirm and/or take issue with current directions of "leadership."

What I do not understand—in the light of our centuries-old New Testament way of "doing church"—is the fact that the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board at the same time "asked that editorials related to any Executive Board matter be tested with the executive director" ("Change is Coming to *The Mennonite*," Nov. 18, 2008).

This sounds a bit like John Howard Yoder's definition of a "high liberal Protestant view" whereby "the role of the pope (authorized to promulgate new binding definitions beyond scriptural mandate) is taken over by a shifting consensus of what literate elites find credible in our time" (*Body Politics*). Yoder rejected this position.

If we want to remain with our spiritual roots, this request needs to be rescinded. *The Mennonite* would otherwise have to object and respond otherwise—out of conscience—to this surprising and very un-Mennonite demand.

We the people—including the editors of *The Mennonite*—need to be informed (the strength of a Jim Schrag column), then also be able to take issue with current directions of "leadership." A strong Anabaptist-minded leadership would even covet such an ongoing critique, where the end product is "we" and not "they."*—Leonard Gross, Goshen, Ind.*

Too personal and painful

Regarding the article on the indictment of former mission workers (News Digest, Jan. 6), I am shocked that something so personal and painful would be published in *The Mennonite* in such detail. Those personally involved are hurting way too much already, and we who don't know them don't need to know details.

Are there guidelines for confidentiality in journalism, such as HIPPA in the field of medicine?

The change of paper and ink seems to be a good move.*—Vera L. Steiner, Goshen, Ind.*

Muslims' view of Jesus

Regarding Ray Horst's letter (Readers Say, Jan. 6), I ask my brother in Christ to study Islam a bit more, Islam's Jesus is not the Jesus of the Bible. When I speak with Muslims, they say many good things and praise Jesus as the son of Mary, but when pinned down on their exact beliefs, Muslims say Jesus didn't die on the cross; he was taken to heaven alive until the time Muhammad has come again and Jesus comes back to the world to destroy the Jews and help convert the world to Islam, then get married, have kids and eventually die.

Islam teaches that Jesus was a prophet but that Muhammed is the greatest prophet. I thought Mennonites believed Jesus was the Son of God, the Savior. Has this changed?*—Brian Lay, Sioux City, Iowa*

Responding to war in Gaza

The Christmas story as told in Matthew and Luke sets up a stark contrast: Roman peace through military victory or Jesus' victory through love, peace and justice.

Today in Palestine/Israel, humans continue to choose between these victories as Gaza explodes. Significant numbers of both Israelis and Palestinians are choosing to work nonviolently.

We who look on from afar also choose between apathy and action. If you choose action, pray.

These prayers are offered by the heads of churches in Jerusalem and the Holy Land:

We pray for the day when the people of Gaza will be free from occupation, from political differences, from violence and from despair.

We pray for the Israelis and Palestinians to respect human life and God's love for every human life and to take all possible measures to end this suffering. Only bold steps toward just peace and ending the violence will protect the human life and dignity of both people.

With the prophet we keep praying and hoping: "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope" (Isaiah 42:3-4, NIV).

From Mennonite Christian Peacemaker Teams (www.cpt.org) members Kathleen Kern and Jim Roynan, currently in Palestine:

- Palestinians and Israelis need prayers for deliverance from political cynicism.
- It is difficult to know how to pray in such a twisted situation. Lord, have mercy on us all, those who are suffering, those causing suffering and those who are keeping silent for whatever reason(s).*—Susan Mark Landis, peace advocate Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership*

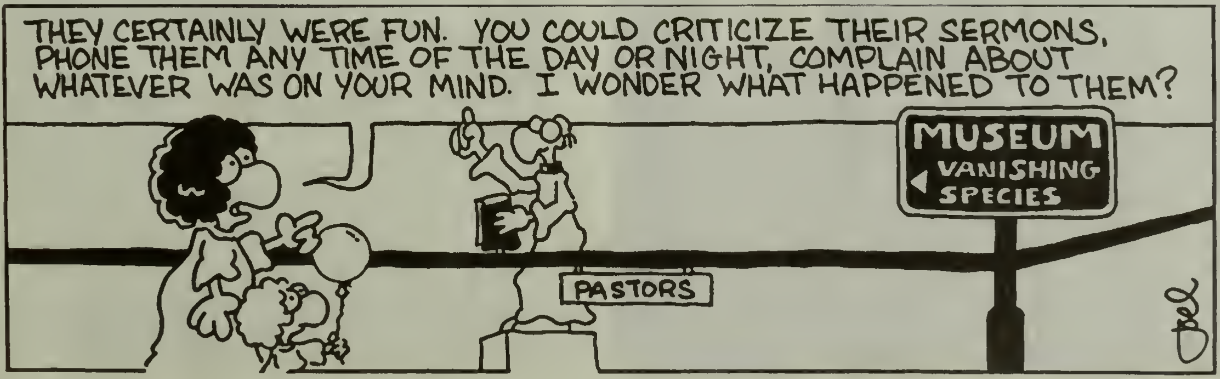
ONLINE POLL RESULTS

My current pastor(s) attended a Mennonite seminary (77 votes):

○ Yes (57%)
○ No (25%)
○ Some yes/some no (12%)
○ Not sure (6%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


THEY CERTAINLY WERE FUN. YOU COULD CRITICIZE THEIR SERMONS, PHONE THEM ANY TIME OF THE DAY OR NIGHT, COMPLAIN ABOUT WHATEVER WAS ON YOUR MIND. I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?
MUSEUM
VANISHING SPECIES
PASTORS
Joel

IN BRIEF

World Cup for the poor, homeless

Afghanistan defeated Russia 5-4 in the men's final of the 2008 Homeless World Cup, held Dec. 1-7, 2008, in Melbourne, Australia. Zambia won the first women's competition; this was the sixth men's event. The competition provides poor and homeless players the opportunity to represent their country and gives spectators a chance to appreciate exhilarating street soccer. The 2008 event saw 56 teams compete in 300-plus matches. Around 130,000 spectators attended for the week. *—National Catholic Reporter*

Rates of violence, rape soar in U.S.

A new government report showing huge increases in the incidences of domestic violence, rape and sexual assault over a two-year period in the United States deserves immediate attention from lawmakers and the incoming administration, Human Rights Watch said Dec. 18, 2008. The statistics show a 42 percent increase in reported domestic violence and a 25 percent increase in the reported incidence of rape and sexual assault. *—Truthout.org*

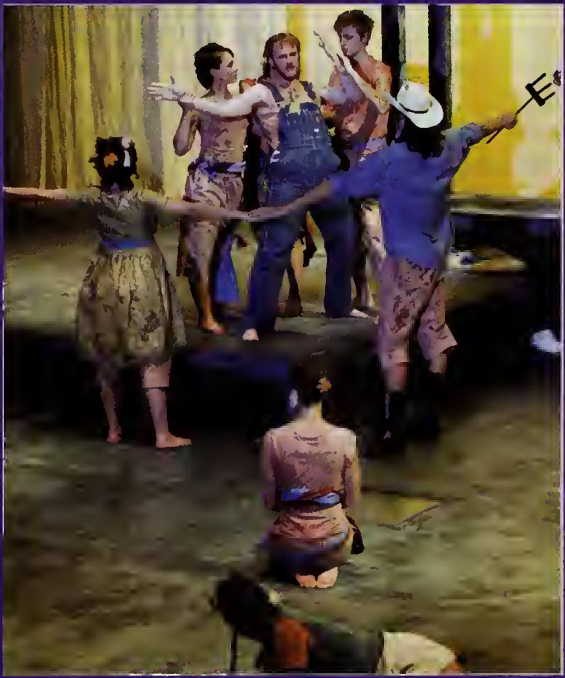
Executive director search committee named

NEWTON, Kan.—Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board has named its search committee to find a replacement for executive director Jim Schrag. In October 2008, Schrag announced his plans for retirement in November 2009. Moderator-elect Ed Diller of Cincinnati, Ohio, will chair the nine-person committee, which plans to start work immediately. Committee members include Glen Guyton of Yorktown, Va.; Charlotte Hardt of Mount Vernon, Wash.; Sue Miller of Middlebury, Ind.; Juanita Nuñez of Ocoee, Fla.; Patty Shelly of Newton, Kan.; David Sutter of South Bend, Ind.; J. Richard Thomas of Lancaster, Pa.; and Keith Weaver of Reinholds, Pa. Moderator Sharon Waltner of Parker, S.D., will be an ex officio member and join the group as necessary.

"It's already become evident that we're looking for a person," Diller says, "who will be a spiritual and missional leader for the denomination and someone with enthusiasm and drive who can build relationships and trust—both between individuals and within our churchwide system."

Staff and board members expect the process to take between six and eight months to complete.

The committee will begin its work immediately and will meet or otherwise communicate frequently until a new executive director is named, Diller says.*—Mennonite Church USA*


Emily Miller

Goshen play wins award, remembers student

Students perform the fall 2008 main-stage production "The Saint Plays" at Goshen (Ind.) College, which was selected for inclusion in the American College Theater Festival, in Saginaw, Mich., Jan. 6-11. Erik Ehn wrote this series of six short plays that link saints from the past with ordinary people. Ehn wrote a special piece about St. Rose of Viterbo, one of the two saints that mark former Goshen student Deanne Binde's birthdate. Binde died May 2008 in a car crash.*—Goshen College*

Yutzy named operations consultant

NEWTON, Kan.—Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership has named LaVern Yutzy of Lititz, Pa., a consultant on churchwide operations and alignment. He began in the role Jan. 8.

La Vern Yutzy

Yutzy will be responsible to help the denomination live within its means, eliminate duplication and achieve its goals. He will be called to identify ways of integrating churchwide priorities into the programs and practices of the entire churchwide system as well as propose ways for simplifying the churchwide system.

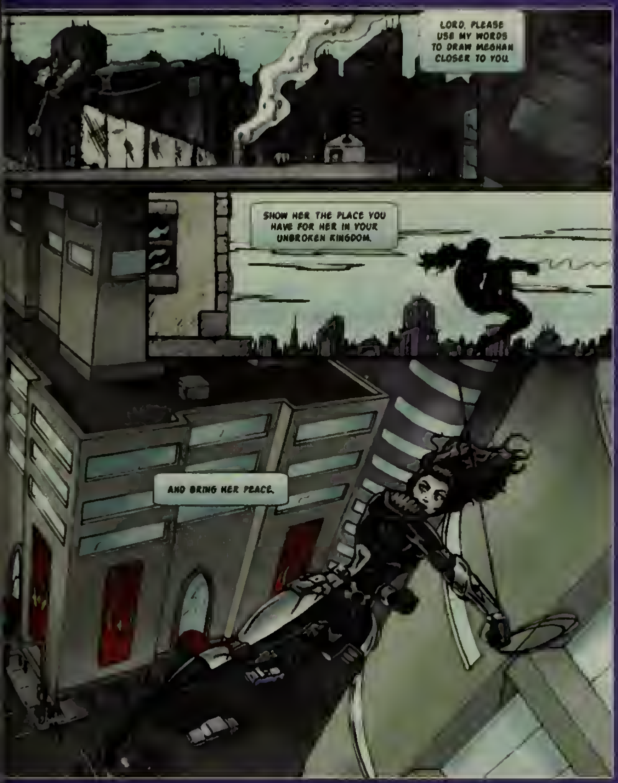
The hiring is connected to a February 2008 Executive Board statement that declared "our vision and call to engage in God's purposes in the world is not adequately supported by our present relationships, behaviors and organization." Later in 2008, the Executive Board outlined several approaches it would take to strengthen the churchwide system. Some of those areas already have been implemented while others—primarily a plan for one board of directors for the entire denomination—has been deferred.

The consultant assignment will be part-time and last between 10 and 12 months, until a new executive director is in place and can make decisions about long-term staffing needs.

As board chair for MMA, Yutzy is familiar with the process and need for a serious examination of Mennonite Church USA's systems and structures. His memo of agreement outlines specific guidelines for addressing any conflicts of interest that may arise while working in the consultant role.

Yutzy served as CEO of Philhaven, a faith-based provider of behavioral health services in south central Pennsylvania that is a part of MHS Alliance, from 1991 to 2008.

Yutzy has a master of science in health administration degree from the Medical College of Virginia/Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Va., and a master of social work degree from The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. He earned his bachelor's degree in sociology from Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., in 1970 and an associate of arts degree from Hesston (Kan.) College in 1968.


LORD, PLEASE USE MY WORDS TO DRAW MEGHAN CLOSER TO YOU.
SHOW HER THE PLACE YOU HAVE FOR HER IN YOUR UNBROKEN KINGDOM.
AND BRING HER PEACE.

Mennonite Publishing Network

Graphic novel addresses peace, nonviolence issues
Herald Press has just published its first graphic novel, *Pax Avalon: Conflict Revolution*. Written and illustrated by Steven "Reece" Friesen, *Pax Avalon* tells the story of Julianna "Pax" Embry, one of the highly trained officers of Avalon City's Special Operations unit. Julianna is blessed with an incredible gift that she uses in her mission as a peacemaker.—*Mennonite Publishing Network*

Yutzy and Janie, his wife, are members of Landisville (Pa.) Mennonite Church.—*Mennonite Church USA*

MCC boosts humanitarian aid to Gaza

WINNIPEG, Man.—Mennonite Central Committee is committing an additional $15,000 for emergency food assistance in Gaza following Israel's aerial bombardment of the impoverished region. Earlier this month, MCC approved an emergency cash grant of $10,000 to help the Amira Society, Al-Najd, and Culture and Free Thought Association distribute food assistance to some of the most vulnerable families in the Gaza Strip (north, central and south).

"The situation was very bad in July when we visited Gaza but it is a lot worse now," says MCC worker Bassem Thabet in an interview from Jerusalem before this month's Israeli attacks.

MCC staff has not been able to visit Gaza in recent months. Even before the attack, however, MCC partner organizations in Gaza were reporting that some of the most vulnerable families now use milled animal feed to make pita bread and discarded plastic pipes as fuel to cook bread and meals. An estimated 1,800 people will benefit from the MCC emergency assistance.—*MCC*

CMU students take the Pearson Challenge

WINNIPEG, Man.—In 1969, then-Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson challenged the world's developed countries to donate 0.7 percent of their Gross Domestic Product to help people in the developing world. Canada has never met that goal. But almost 40 years later, students at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Winnipeg, were given a similar challenge by the student council—to donate at least 0.7 percent of the money they spend on tuition to help children in Africa. Called the Pearson Challenge, the fund-raising effort found 66 students donating $2,226 to Hope Never Runs Dry, a Mennonite Central Committee Global Family program in Uganda.

Student council president Zachary Peters, noting that while the donation of about $34 per student was not quite 0.7 percent of full-time tuition at the university, not all students take a full course load.—*CMU*

Medical, health pioneer Willard Krabill dies

GOSHEN, Ind.—Goshen College physician emeritus and associate professor emeritus of health education Willard S. Krabill, who gave 24 years of service to the college, died Jan. 6 after a six-month battle with cancer at the age of 82. He was one of the authors of Mennonite Church USA's Health-Care Access Resolution adopted in 2003.

Willard Krabill

Krabill was a pioneer in the areas of medical ethics, public health, family-centered childbirth and sex education. During his tenure at the college, Krabill expanded the college health services, was instrumental in creating a health plan for college employees, worked to promote health and sexuality education and disease prevention and treated students who visited the health center.

In 1974, Krabill started the human sexuality class at the college to emphasize the holistic nature of sexuality, encouraging students to see sexuality in the context of their whole lives and enabling them to discuss it comfortably. When he retired in 1991, it was the most popular class on campus.—*Goshen College*

—compiled by Anna Groff

IN BRIEF

Canadian pension plan still solid

Mennonite Church Canada's pension plan is weathering the economic storm better than some, says Bryan Grom of Ardent Financial, the broker for the MC Canada pension plan. Unless plan members specify otherwise, the plan is invested in the Meritas Socially Responsible Asset Allocation Fund. Grom and Kirsten Schroeder, MC Canada's director of human resources, will meet with pension plan members across Canada early in 2009. The meetings are designed to help plan holders review their level of comfort with risk and consider decisions plan holders should and should not be making in financially volatile times.—*Mennonite Church Canada*

Match program aids campers

In 2008, Spruce Lake Wilderness Camp, Canadensis, Pa. established the Church Match Program, another way for churches to participate in Spruce Lake's goal of every child attending camp, regardless of the family's financial situation. The program furthers the already existing partnership with Franconia Conference and other churches. Fifteen churches took part in the program this past summer, with 12 from Franconia Conference. *—Mennonite Camping Association*

A priceless

No price tag on priceless Anabaptist education for the young

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Going to Christopher Dock High School in Lansdale, Pa., has been a priceless experience for senior Amanda Yoder. The value isn't only the Anabaptist faith perspective or how the spiritual riches received far outweigh the price tag of tuition.

What most puts it in the can't-count-the-cost category is more personal than that for Yoder. She's been respected as a person created by God with gifts to share and regarded as someone who is loved and called by Christ to love others, she says.

"This campus [serving about 400 students in grades 9-12] lives out community in a way that everyone is given respect," Yoder says. "That is something you just don't find very much in our world today.

"My Anabaptist education has totally changed my worldview. I'm encouraged to accept myself as created by God but also to extend that respect to everyone—including people who are different from me."

education

Not too good to be true: Yoder's story may seem too good to be true. But it isn't. The mission to form such views in hundreds of children and young people is a far-reaching reality. It's found in the 39 elementary and secondary schools that belong to Mennonite Schools Council (MSC), resourced by Mennonite Education Agency (MEA), the education agency of Mennonite Church USA.

"The financial costs seem high in today's economic climate, but when one considers the Christ-centered, full-life approach our schools represent, I don't think we can put a price tag on the value," says J. Richard Thomas, MSC president and superintendent of Lancaster Mennonite School, serving grades K-12 (about 1,500 students).

"As Anabaptist educators, we partner with the church in forming Christ followers. To do that, we provide academic excellence, foster a committed discipleship, build community and shape servant-hearted and peace-loving perspectives."

Remaining rooted and reaching out: Mennonite schools remain undaunted in their passion to form young people for whom Christ-centered living is not skin-deep but part of their lifelong DNA. This task is complicated by the fact that MSC not only serves students from Mennonite Church USA congregations but also many students who aren't Mennonites—or aren't part of any church.

Many MSC schools today have less than a majority of students that are Mennonite, which is different from earlier days, and are being called to reach out increasingly to diverse communities and student bodies.

Such schools include Lake Center Christian School in Hartville, Ohio, sponsored by three local Mennonite churches. The portion of Mennonite students is about 15 percent, one of the lowest percentages of any MSC school, says Matt R. McMullen, superintendent of the school that serves grades K-12 (about 630 students).

"Our challenge is valuing our Anabaptist viewpoint while still reaching out to students from any Christian denomination," he says. "We now serve students who come from 20 different denominations and about 150 congregations. We strive to stay true to our center and to share the gifts of our perspective without trying to make people Mennonites."

Another school called to reach out in new ways is Mount Clare Christian School in inner-city Baltimore. It's situated in a low-income, violence-ridden section of the city. The school inhabits a block that was almost a ghost town except for the drug traffic, says Gwen Martin, principal.

I'm encouraged to accept myself as created by God but also to extend that respect to everyone—including people who are different from me. —Amanda Yoder

The vision for this multiracial school was birthed in the mid-1990s. Two teachers who formerly belonged to Wilkens Avenue Mennonite Church, the school's sponsoring congregation, renovated six condemned row houses, which opened as a school in 1998.

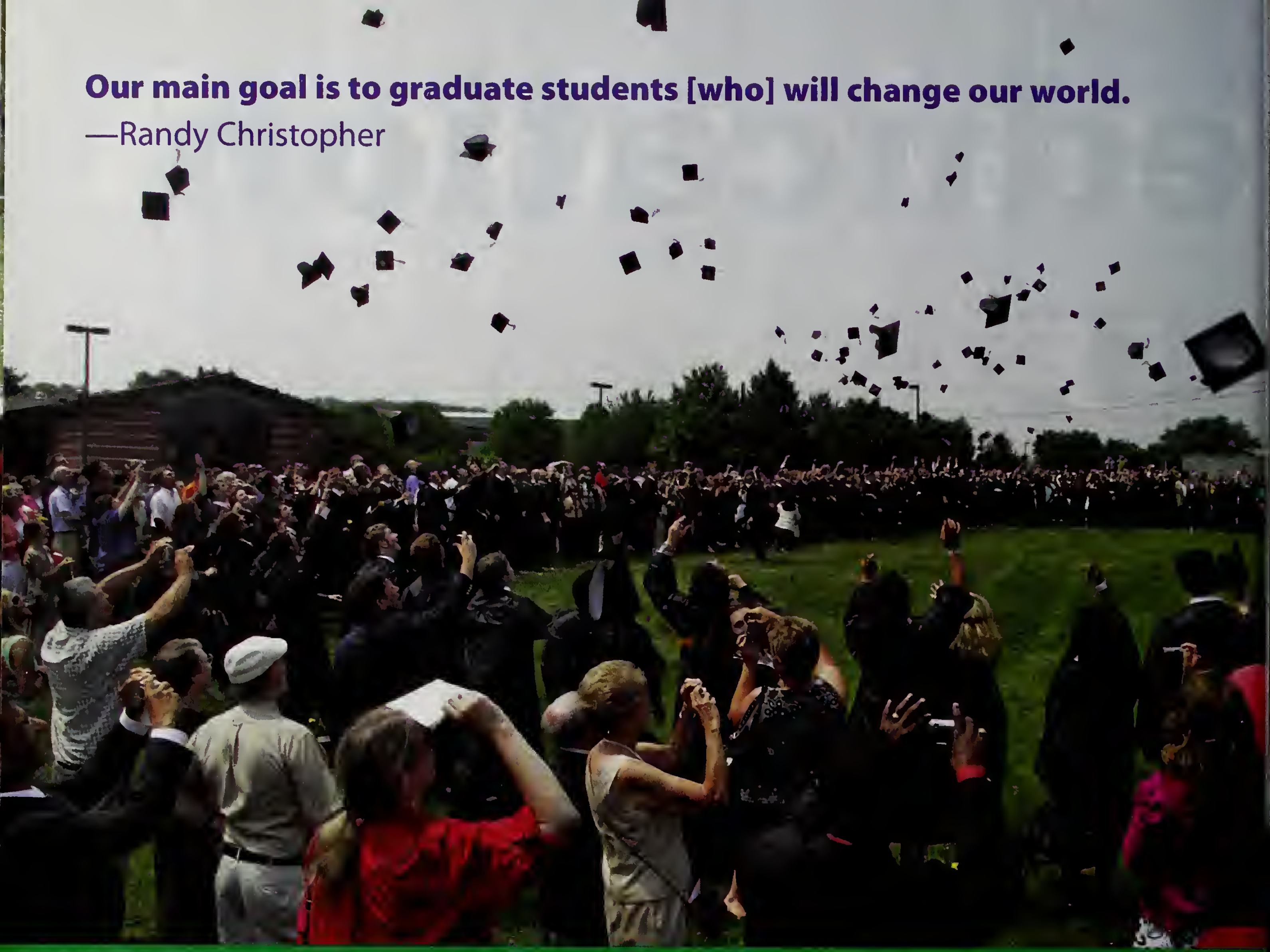
It now serves 47 students in grades 1-12. The school is flourishing, but its setting presents many challenges in addition to the joy that Mount Clare can be a tool for love and healing.

"My biggest joy happens when I have the freedom to pray with kids," she says. "Just like the 9-year-old who came to school the other day. He was worried about his sick, 85-year-old grandmother who is his caretaker. Because I am part of a Christian school, I was free to take him on my lap and pray with him. I am so grateful that we were able to call upon God together."

Forays into such neighborhoods are only just the beginning. MSC and MEA are constantly encouraging the birth of new schools, such as The Peace and Justice Academy. It hopes to open fall 2009 in ethnically diverse Pasadena, Calif. The school is a nonprofit enterprise with Pasadena Mennonite Church and a local Korean Mennonite church serving as sponsors.

Co-founders are Randy Christopher, a marriage and family therapist and head of customer service and quality assurance for a large company, and Kimberly Medendorp, a credentialed teacher and school administrator. The first year will open with a class of sixth graders and a class of ninth graders. More classes will be added until a middle school and high school are offered, grades 6-12.

Continued on page 10



Our main goal is to graduate students [who] will change our world.
—Randy Christopher

Continued from page 9

"Our main goal is to graduate students [who] will change our world," Christopher says. "Our Mennonite tradition has much to share with other Christians and non-Christians. An educational program that focuses on peacemaking and social justice in a nurturing community is a rare treasure and can be a precious gift to children and their families."

Facing cultural challenges: Anabaptist educators face many challenges in presenting their worldview of faith inside and outside Mennonite communities. They often feel they are swimming against the tide of a culture, says Preston Bush, Bible and social studies teacher at Christopher Dock.

"Many of my Mennonite students are not much different from students from other backgrounds," he says. "Our culture is seeping into our own faith communities. And that's made me more intentional about presenting an unapologetic biblical narrative, complete with its historical Anabaptist dimensions. ... I strive to help them engage with their own story, even as they respect others' stories."

24-7 modeling: Teachers in all areas of study are powerfully shaping their students' faith journey. "That means all of us are called to keep Christ at the center," says Allan Dueck, principal of Bethany Christian School, serving grades 6-12 (about 320 students) in Goshen, Ind. "In our chapels we talk about being good stewards of God-given sexuality. In our drama department we do plays that focus on peace. In our sports we encourage excellence without fostering a fiercely competitive spirit that harms teammates or rivals.

"Community building becomes priority. Every teacher and administrator is held responsible to live Christ's ways one-on-one and in the classroom. We must model what it means to have a 24-7 faith rather than just during one hour every Sunday morning."

A couple that is a grateful recipient of this community building is Keenan and C.J. Wenger. Bethany provides a safe spiritual and emotional setting for two of their adopted children, who need extra love and care because of early trauma.

"We struggled with knowing whether we should put our children in Bethany, but it's turned out to be a really nurturing place for them," C.J. says. "The acceptance of the teachers and the students has really helped heal the poor self-images they've carried."

Keenan says, "The cost of Bethany scares a lot of parents away, but it shouldn't. Bethany and our congregation [Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Ind.]—like many other Mennonite congregations—have financial scholarships and grants and take families' needs to heart."

The unbroken circle: Many of these schools have served multiple generations of families. Mary Helen Heinbaugh has served for 30 years as a first-grade teacher at Lake Center and agrees with Thomas that education is at the heart of perpetuating the Anabaptist faith.

"I am teaching quite a few children of students I taught years ago," says 63-year-old Heinbaugh. "It's struck me that parents of these current students must have had a good experience here to be coming back like this with the next generation."

One of MSC's main goals is to help the schools retain the strong roots of their Anabaptist heritage yet explore new efforts to serve these new generations. The organization knows that "any community that wants to last beyond its current generation must take the education of its young seriously," Thomas says.

That means MSC must continue to help the schools sharpen their focus and broaden their scope through new initiatives in accreditation, Anabaptist teacher training, curriculum building and envisioning for an uncertain future with faith in a faithful God.

"God is a God of love who casts out fear," says Elaine Moyer, Christopher Dock principal and a member of the MSC executive committee. "It's challenging to stay faithful during these times when money is tight. But it's not a time to hole up and close off.

"It's a time to let our light shine, to reaffirm our valuing communities of faith and radical discipleship. It's time to live out and help our youth live out Christ's way of peace."

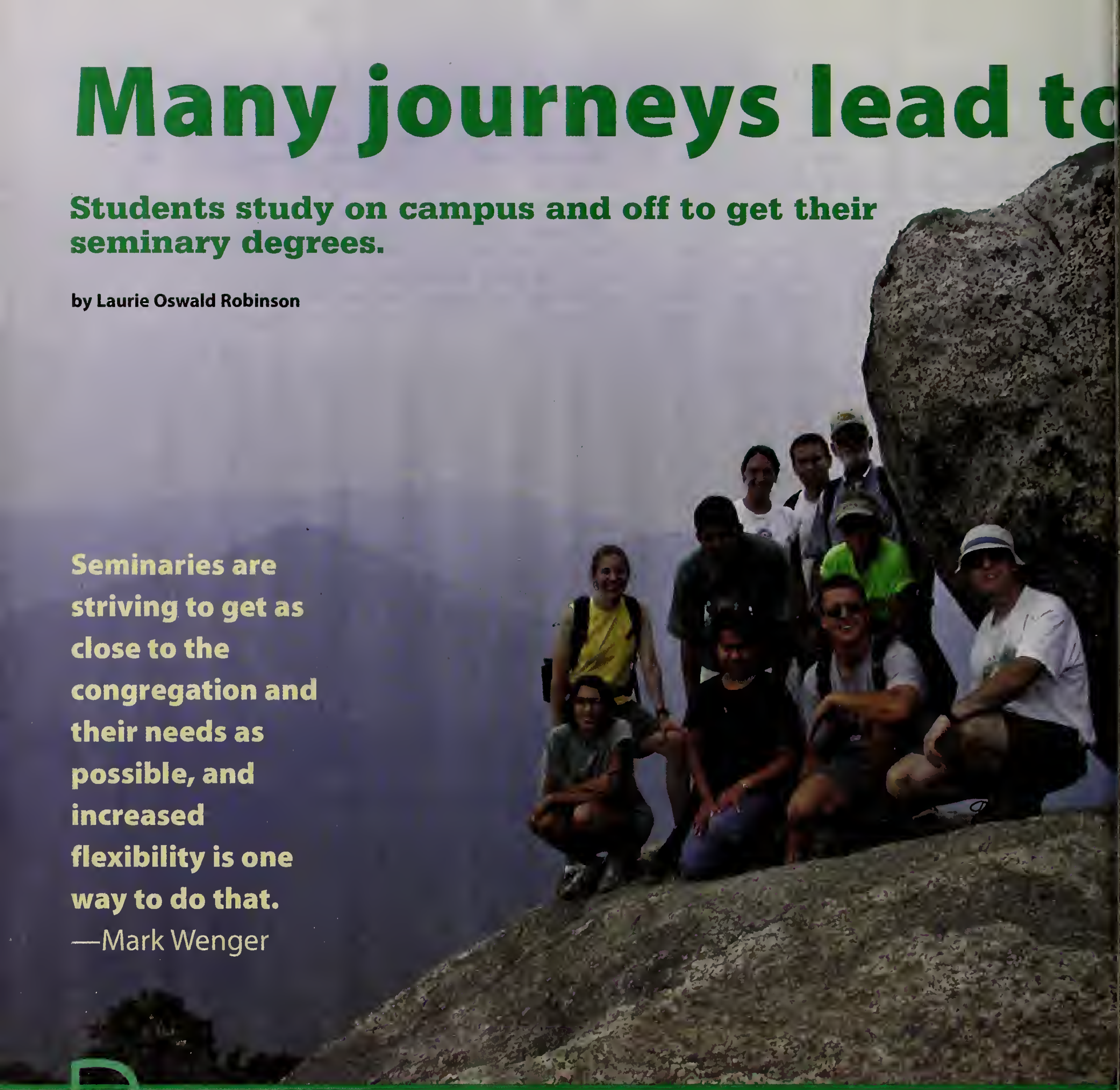
Laurie Oswald Robinson is a freelance writer and photographer from Newton, Kan.

We must model what it means to have a 24-7 faith rather than just during one hour every Sunday morning.—Allan Dueck

Many journeys lead to

Students study on campus and off to get their seminary degrees.

by Laurie Oswald Robinson



> **Seminaries are striving to get as close to the congregation and their needs as possible, and increased flexibility is one way to do that.**
> —Mark Wenger

Because increasingly diverse journeys are leading students to Mennonite Church USA's seminaries, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., and Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS) in Harrisonburg, Va., are opening new doors to these "travelers."

Many students fit the "traditional student" category of spending their seminary career on the main campuses. But many others do not. They commute from home while remaining engaged in their current work and community. They take online classes from afar. They do part of their coursework at the EMS extension in Lancaster, Pa., and the AMBS Great Plains extension in North Newton, Kan.

Mennonite seminaries

Some students pursue a master's degree to enhance various ministries or vocations or to use as a springboard for more advanced study. Some pursue the professional master of divinity (MDiv) degree to become lead pastors. Some pursue a certificate or other kinds of studies. The many paths that lead to preparation show that one size does not fit all, and seminaries are adjusting.

"Seminaries are striving to get as close to the congregation and their needs as possible, and increased flexibility is one way to do that," says Mark Wenger, director of pastoral education at EMS-Lancaster, who guided the process that led the extension to become fully accredited last October. "There are so many people in midlife who are sensing a call to seminary, but it's not feasible for them to come to campus centers."

For the first time, the full accreditation means that EMS students who are rooted in southeastern Pennsylvania don't have to pull up stakes and move to the main campus—not even for a third of their studies, as was required in the past. Now they can take all the coursework for their MDiv at the EMS extension and at several nearby seminaries that are in a cooperative relationship with EMS.

Striving for "ah-ha" moments: Bringing seminary to where students are residentially, spiritually and academically is helping potential students of all ages and all walks heed their call into ministry. But no matter where it is—on the main campus or an extension site—professors and faculty strive for the same thing: to transform people from students who hover on the periphery of a call to those who plunge wholeheartedly into a call they own.

"I believe our Mennonite seminaries are most deeply serving the church by the way they help solidify God's call in people's lives," says Lois Barrett, director of the AMBS Great Plains Extension and assistant professor of theology and Anabaptist studies.

"We're not only concerned about the skills for ministry they can hone, but we also want to help birth the pastoral identity of each person," she says. "I am always working for the 'ah-ha' moments, the day when a student says, 'I am called. I am a pastor. I am a minister.'"

Barrett says the practicum—a hands-on ministry experience that often accompanies coursework—is what often evokes this identification. "Ah-ha" happens for 20-somethings entering seminary directly out of college. "Ah-ha" happens for the many people in their 40s and 50s preparing part-time for a second vocation.

"Ah-ha" happens for people who don't have an undergraduate degree but choose options in line with their academic level, such as the STEP program. "Ah-ha" happens for people who want a more limited amount of credit hours.

Even high school students who want to explore a future in pastoral ministry can partake of programs such as LEAP and !Explore. And pastors serving in Mennonite congregations but who come from other faith traditions can now complete core requirements—in a program called Gateway—that shape them in Anabaptist perspective.

Wenger, Barrett and other seminary professionals believe that God's call is as varied as the lives of those who sense that call, which is evident in hearing students' stories.

Rosanna McFadden, free-lance artist and commuter student at AMBS

"I was a busy free-lance artist and a mother trying to keep up with my three kids when I first took a couple of classes without enrolling as a student," says Rosanna McFadden, 45, Goshen, Ind. She is now enrolled as a part-time commuter student pursuing a 60-credit-hour master's degree in Christian formation with a concentration in worship and plans to graduate this spring.

It has been such a joy for me to have that artistic side of me recognized and encouraged.—Rosanna McFadden

"The logistical flexibility helped me explore first before I jumped in with both feet," she says. "The intellectual flexibility helped me as an older student who wasn't seeking certitude as much as I wanted deeper ways to connect my life with what I was learning."

The flexibility opened up new vistas she hadn't initially sought. She first came because she wanted more theological background for the artwork she did for her denomination, the Church of the Brethren. But the longer she studied, the more she discovered a love of worship and made new connections about how the arts and drama enrich it.

"The Anabaptist branch of the church hasn't been known for affirming the arts and drama in its worship," she says. "It has been such a joy for me to have that artistic side of me recognized and encouraged."

Continued on page 14

EMS Lancaster campus | Photographer Dale Gehman

Continued from page 13

Lorie Hershey, EMS grad, pastor at West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship

Lorie Hershey left her community in Lancaster, Pa., in her mid-30s to pursue an MDiv on the main Harrisonburg campus. Leaving "home" helped her establish her own faith identity and vocational choice separate from her past.

"I came from where people weren't sure about women in ministry," she says. "Women, including my mother, did a lot of lay ministry. And I was given leadership opportunities as a young person, too. But formalizing that into a pastoral role was not in our paradigm.

"I know it's not possible for everyone to move and come to the main campus, but it was the best route for me. The on-campus experience really helped me develop my own personhood.

"At seminary you learn about how your background shaped you, how God is shaping you now, where God is calling you in the future," she says. "This is important for your pastorate. There are so many different people at so many different junctures in their walk with God, and knowing your own story helps them to know theirs, too."

The campus felt like a real home and a real faith community.—Corey Miller

Corey Miller, AMBS grad, pastor of Tabor Mennonite Church, rural Newton, Kan.

Corey Miller's completion of his MDiv studies spanned a decade and occurred at two different sites—the AMBS Great Plains Extension in North Newton, Kan., and the Elkhart campus.

Corey was a youth pastor at Mennonite congregations in Hillsboro, Kan., while taking coursework. "I had the best of both worlds," says Corey, 43. "I could do youth ministry on a more hands-on level while I took classes at Great Plains. I spread out my first 60 hours over a nine-year period, which gave me time to discern whether completing my master of divinity was what God was really calling me to do."

For the remaining 30 hours, he, Nancy (his wife) and 7-month-old daughter Hannah moved to Elkhart for a year. Campus life helped balance out the intensity of studies and dispelled some stereotypes about seminary being lopsided in caring only about academics, he says.

"The campus felt like a real home and a real faith community," he says. "My family and I were encouraged emotionally and spiritually through the activities provided for families through socials, chapels and other events."

Integrating a historical heritage with new horizons: No matter what facet of seminary education professors and administrators are called to provide, many of them believe the 21st century is a new day, calling for a new strength. It will be the kind of strength that bends but does not break, that holds fast to its fixed heritage while opening hands to new horizons.

One way the seminaries are developing new strengths is in technology. For example, Linford Stutzman, director of the John Coffman Center at EMS, which provides resources for developing missional leaders, is helping develop some hybrid courses. Students' coursework includes online studies as well as face-to-face, on-site interaction with the subject matter. For example, he taught a class about the first-century church in the Mediterranean last spring.

"We must provide some bold, innovative and attractive options for the young adults who are hungry to use their gifts but who also have so many options today for how to develop those," he says.

Bob Rosa, AMBS director of enrollment, agrees with Stutzman. Older and more seasoned students as well as the young and untried are gifts that complement one another.

"It's so encouraging to see an upswing in the numbers of young, first-vocation students coming in," Rosa says. "Like all denominations, Mennonite Church USA needs more pastors to strengthen congregations and plant new ones. So these younger students are not only encouraging for the seminary but also for congregations."

Laurie Oswald Robinson is a freelance writer and photographer from Newton, Kan.

One of the growing edges for Mennonite Church USA is the racial-ethnic constituency. The Racial/Ethnic Leadership Education (RELE) programs of Mennonite Church USA focus on creating educational opportunities for the racial-ethnic community to connect with the denomination (article on page 17).

About 100 Spanish-speaking Mennonite Church USA congregations are part of Iglesia Menonita Hispana (IMH). In spite of this, the accessibility to Anabaptist-Mennonite education for this group is still limited. There is especially a need for Spanish higher education, and the need grows greater as new Hispanic Mennonite churches are planted and established.

Continued on page 16

Training Hispanic Mennonite leaders

New program of formal theological education in Spanish

by Rachel Nussbaum Eby

IBA graduates | Photographer Violeta Ajquejay

There is especially a need for Spanish higher education, and the need grows greater as new Hispanic Mennonite churches are planted and established.

Continued from page 15

Violeta Ajquejay, assistant director of Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (IBA), talks about a conversation she had with an IBA leader in the Miami area that highlights the urgency. "This group of IBA graduates has been waiting for a long time for a higher theological education program that would respond to their needs. As a result, they have been considering other options; therefore, it is more than due time for a Mennonite program at a higher level."

Rafael Barahona, Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) associate director, visits Hispanic congregations as part of his work with the Hispanic Pastoral and Leadership Education (HPLE) program (of which IBA is a part). Increasingly he has seen why the need for theological education at a higher level is so important.

This is a significant time, since many Hispanic leaders are trying to upgrade and also complete their theological education.—Juanita Nuñez

"Some leaders use resources from other denominations for their education, which is not always the best when they conflict with Anabaptist-Mennonite beliefs. We are called to respond to this need by continuing to find ways we can provide theological education and training to the Hispanic population because what we want is to have a Mennonite-educated and -trained leadership in the pulpits of Spanish-speaking congregations."

Beginning in 2009, HPLE will meet this need by offering a new biblical and theological education program in Spanish at an undergraduate level. The HPLE program will offer a Certificate in Pastoral Ministry that will be accessible and affordable to the current leadership of the Hispanic Mennonite churches regardless of location. The certificate program is envisioned to be 28 credit hours that can be completed in two years and three months.

HPLE staff, in consultation with some higher education faculty and denominational leadership, has developed this curriculum using the denominational competencies for pastoral leadership as a guide. As a result, pastors who finish the program will also fulfill the Mennonite Church USA pastoral credentialing requirements and the credentialing guidelines used by many Mennonite conferences.

The denominational competencies include items such as Bible and hermeneutics; pastoral leadership; Anabaptist-Mennonite story, theology and principles; and Christian spirituality and discipleship. Courses in the new curriculum directly correspond with these competencies, such as Biblical Interpretation I & II, Theory and Practice of Pastoral Leadership

Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (Anabaptist Biblical Institute)

The Instituto Bíblico Anabautista, a biblical and theological education program for leadership training of Hispanic Mennonites, was established in 1988 by the General Conference Mennonite Church. IBA continues its dedication to training Hispanic men and women for missional church leadership as part of Mennonite Church USA. IBA is a program of Mennonite Education Agency in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network and Iglesia Menonita Hispana.

IBA focuses on the development of leaders with solid biblical foundations, theological competence and spiritual maturity using a decentralized, congregation-based model. Two levels of study are offered: a two-year certificate program and a four-year diploma program. Some area conferences have already adopted IBA as one of their educational requirements for ministerial credentialing for Spanish-speaking pastors.

IBA has 34 volunteer tutors who lead classes in 27 congregationally-based study centers, with 21 centers located in the United States, two in Canada and four in Puerto Rico. There is interest in new study centers every year. Congregations that host study centers give significant in-kind contributions, including space and hospitality.

The average number of students enrolled annually is 215. More than 1,000 students have taken courses since 1988. Students represent more than 15 Latin American countries as well as people of Hispanic origin born in the United States. Students are from varying levels of educational background, ages 13 to 80. Twenty percent are pastors and church planters, and the others are lay people involved in congregational leadership.

Youth leaders also enroll in IBA. Usually if a congregation has an IBA study center and has a youth leader who does not have any formal theological training, he or she will undertake IBA studies, often contributing to discovering new leadership roles. IBA also offers a workshop for youth ministries, "How to lead a Bible study for youth."

In addition to classes at the study centers, students also have opportunity to attend an IBA student retreat with other students in the area. These retreats provide opportunities for study, worship, fellowship and special activities.

For more information, email IBA@MennoniteEducation.org, or visit the Web site, www.MennoniteEducation.org/IBA.
—*Rachel Nussbaum Eby*

and Theology of Pastoral Ministry.

Juanita Nuñez, IMH moderator, shares her enthusiasm for the new program. "This is a fantastic opportunity for us, which is the vision of the IMH board, not only because it is important but also because some of our leadership came from other roots. This is a significant time, since many Hispanic leaders are trying to upgrade and also complete their theological education. As leaders, we have challenges that demand higher education."

According to Barahona, many of the components are in place, and HPLE continues to work with partners to finalize how the program is going to look and what it will be called.

Barahona is excited about the diverse group this program could serve. "With this program, there is a great potential to reach Hispanic leaders who would not otherwise have access to Anabaptist-Mennonite theological higher education," he says.

"People often come into positions of pastoral leadership due to their strong call to ministry," he says. "While they are interested in further education, the opportunity to study in a formal program is geographically and financially impossible."

Barahona expects interest in the undergraduate program also to come from some current pastors who received their training many years ago and want the opportunity to complete their theological studies or to pursue more studies. He also expects many IBA graduates are ready to continue into higher theological education.

Anabaptist-Mennonite education in Spanish has been offered in the past. The former General Conference Mennonite Church first sponsored IBA in 1988 as an educational system using a decentralized, congregation-based model. IBA continues as a program of Mennonite Church USA and focuses on teaching leadership skills and biblical knowledge.

One of the ways the former Mennonite Church responded to the need was the creation of Hispanic Ministries, a four-year undergraduate program, at Goshen (Ind.) College in 1979; this program was phased out in 2005.

"HPLE staff has worked hard to create a strong Anabaptist-Mennonite education program that incorporates the needs of Hispanic Mennonites," says Carlos Romero, executive director of MEA. "The intent is to work in partnerships across the church that will allow us to connect the dots, not reinvent the wheel; to use our limited resources more efficiently and respond to a need. It will impact Mennonite Church USA for years to come by developing many strong Mennonite leaders."

Rachel Nussbaum Eby is the director of communications of Mennonite Education Agency.

Racial/Ethnic Leadership Education programs of MC USA

Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) oversees the Racial/Ethnic Leadership Education (RELE) programs. These programs are unique in that they focus on connecting with the growing numbers of racial/ethnic people in Mennonite Church USA, their congregations and their communities. MEA is committed to identifying and providing for the educational needs of racial-ethnic people of Mennonite Church USA.

- The Lark Leadership Scholarship, a program of African-American Mennonite Association, provides financial assistance to students in AAMA-related churches (www.aamamcusa.org) to enroll in college-level courses that will enhance their ministry skills. Students can enroll in a school in their home area, allowing them to remain active in the ministry of their congregations and immediately apply new learning.
- The Native Education and Training (NET) program is run in association with Native Mennonite Ministries. This scholarship fund is available to Native American people relating to Mennonite Church USA congregations. While it focuses primarily on pastoral ministry education, it also supports those pursuing Christian general education in a Mennonite institution.
- The Hispanic Pastoral and Leadership Education (HPLE program is run in partnership with Iglesia Hispana Menonita and Mennonite Mission Network. Rafael Barahona is the MEA associate director working with this program. MenoAcontecer (Menno Happenings), a free monthly Mennonite electronic magazine in Spanish is written by HPLE staff and distributed by *The Mennonite*. (If you are interested in a free subscription, simply email menoacontecer@themennonite.org.) HPLE is also responsible for coordinating Instituto Bíblico Anabautista, continuing education events for Hispanic pastors and the new program of formal theological education in Spanish.—*Rachel Nussbaum Eby*

Rafael Barahona at Iglesia Menonita Luz del Evangelio | IBA

Church and world need Mennonite schools

Carlos Romero is executive director of Mennonite Education Agency.

We live in changing and challenging times. The economic turmoil has created an environment of uncertainty and fear, with layoffs in large numbers, the national foreclosure crisis and the roller-coaster ride of the Dow Jones. We see the balance of our investment accounts dropping. In the midst of this, we are a church trying to live faithfully God's call to be agents of healing and hope.

Our culture has also become polarized. Questions tend to be phrased in either/or terms. The definition of long-term is often shortened to three or so years from now. During a time like this, both the church and the world need strong Mennonite schools.

It's important that support for our schools should not be seen within the either/or context or with a short-term lens. I have been in many settings where the conversation of support for Mennonite education is framed around the question, "Do you support Mennonite Education or public education?" This is not helpful as we seek as a church to understand what it means to be missional and respond to the challenges around us. Mennonites have God-given treasures to share with the world—our schools are one of many.

Education's impact on the denomination is much longer term than two to four years.

Our educational institutions contribute to the building of a strong church foundation—from helping shape and build Mennonite identity to providing pastors and other church leaders. Past research and anecdotal evidence have helped us understand the significant role of education. There is a higher probability for Mennonites who attend our schools to stay in the church. There is a correlation between the Mennonite education experience and those who later spend time in service. Programs such as the Ministry Inquiry Program help shape a sense of call to the church. All this does not happen overnight. Education's impact on the denomination is much longer term than two to four years.

Across the many levels of Mennonite education, our institutions serve students from a variety of faiths, backgrounds and nationalities. Students who receive an education shaped by the Anabaptist-Mennonite understandings go on to serve in multiple capacities around the world—making an impact in their fields, communities and countries. We need our schools to be centers that not only help teach our constituents but share our educational experience with the broader community and world.

I have been told my role at Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) results in a bias toward our Mennonite institutions. I do see a bias. I am biased because I have seen and heard about

- the life-changing and lifelong relationships that have developed in our schools,
- the character of our students and how an Anabaptist-Mennonite lens affects how they see the world,
- the commitment of our faculty, who often work at a much lower pay scale because of their strong belief in Mennonite education,
- the love and focus on faith development given to Mennonite and community children in our early-childhood centers,
- the intentional ways our faculty and administrators work to integrate faith into the classroom regardless of the subject matter,
- the discussions of our presidents, principals and school administrators, which reveal their strong love for and commitment to the church.

I could give many more reasons. My own journey has led me to serve the church; I would not be here today if not for my Mennonite education experience. So yes, I am biased, but not because of my role at MEA. It is because of my awareness of what Mennonite education has done and is doing in the lives of so many that I accepted the call to serve as executive director.

Perhaps the role of our institutions is more vital than ever in our current economy and culture. I want to make a bold proposal that as a church we make a commitment that each person in the future should have two years of Mennonite education. I strongly believe this will help us be a stronger church and will help our transformation into a community that shares God's healing and hope with the world. TM

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Allegiance at the fault lines**—J. Nelson Kraybill
- **Bread and bridges**—Laurie Oswald Robinson

Bikers begin 8,500-mile ride to Paraguay

Two young men to raise funds so others can attend Global Youth Summit.

A group of well-wishers stood in the rain on Jan. 6 as Lars Åkerson, 22, of Harrisonburg, Va., and Jonathan Spicher, 20, of Lancaster, Pa., left Virginia Mennonite Conference headquarters in Park View, Va., pointing their 27-speed touring bikes southward. Six months and some 8,500 miles later, they hope to arrive in Asunción, Paraguay, to attend two global church meetings.

Åkerson and Spicher are aware of the major challenge, risk and unknowns facing them, but they feel confident they will persevere with God's protection and the support of family and friends.

The 15th Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly is set for July 13-19 in Asunción, with the Global Youth Summit preceding on July 9-12. The first such gathering was held in 2003 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, and attracted more than 220 young adults from 28 countries.

It's an adventure certainly, but more than that the pair seeks to raise funds to help more young adults from other countries to attend the summit.

They will also engage individuals, Anabaptist churches and larger groups along the way, listen to others' concerns and vision for the church, but they also anticipate doing service projects as they arise in keeping with the focus of the youth summit, "Service: Live the Difference."

They also worked with people at Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and with Mennonite conferences in setting up contacts on their route.

Åkerson graduated from Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., in 2008, a double major in mathematics and liberal arts with a minor in Spanish. Spicher plans to return to EMU this fall as a senior premed major. His biking venture will fulfill the school's cross-cultural requirement.

The first segment of the journey will include stops in Durham, N.C., and at Jubilee Partners in Comer, Ga. They plan to travel through Alabama, Louisiana and Texas and cross into Mexico, through Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and, finally, Paraguay.

They've invited others to join them for sections of the ride, for a few miles or several days. They also hope to spend time interacting with the EMU cross-cultural spring semester seminar group whose time in Guatemala will coincide with their trip. They will also visit MCC workers in various locations and Conservative Mennonite Conference personnel in Ecuador.

Before the trip, when asked about the weather uncertainties and risk and safety factors of this trek across two continents, Åkerson and Spicher remained silent a moment before responding.

Lindsey Roeschley

Lars Åkerson (left) and Jonathan Spicher leave Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 6. They planned to spend their first night on the road at Charlottesville (Va.) Mennonite Church.

"Our main concern is the last leg of the trip," Åkerson said. "We'll spend much of the last two months biking in elevations up to 14,000 feet above sea level."

"We will be vulnerable, but we're relying on people's hospitality and intentionally depending on God and others for safety and protection," Spicher said. "We've done some planning for contingencies but can't anticipate everything that could happen along the way."

Nancy Heisey, chair of the Bible and religion department at EMU and president of MWC, called the pair's impending venture "exciting and scary."

"I admire the amount of energy Lars and Jonathan are putting into this journey," Heisey said, "but even more, I'm pleased that they are demonstrating a commitment to spiritual growth as well as the significant contribution they want to make to other young adults around the world."

The pair has set up an interactive Web site (http://americas.bikemovement.org) where they will provide updates of their journey. Anyone who wants to contribute to the fund-raising effort can do so at the same site.

"We hope that our journey will encourage and add to an intercultural conversation about discerning and living Christ's call with integrity," said Åkerson.

"Biking together is a great relationship-building endeavor," Spicher said. "I'm excited to have this opportunity for two-way learning with brothers and sisters and for spiritual growth."—*Jim Bishop*

Iowa congregation reaches out to unchurched family in crisis

A lot of his skateboarding friends came with their body piercings, tattoos of all kinds—and there was not a tie in the whole place.
—Curt Kuhns

When Manson (Iowa) Mennonite Church reached out to 7-year-old Matt and his younger siblings, the congregation had no idea it would host his funeral 13 years later.

Curt Kuhns, pastor of Manson Mennonite, conducted the funeral at the church in June 2008 for Matt, who died in a job-related grain bin accident. Kuhns also developed a relationship with Matt's grandfather, Gary, at Golden Meadows, a local retirement community, where he helped conduct Gary's funeral in the spring of 2007.

The congregation has ministered to this extended family for years in many ways, though none of the family members has joined the church. But that isn't Manson Mennonite's biggest concern, Kuhns says. It believes in sowing seeds of God's love, even if those seeds don't yield fruit quickly or in ways traditionally thought to mean success.

"Our relationship with Matt and his younger sister and brother goes way back to when they were little kids who sometimes showed up when our doors were open," Kuhns says.

They attended the Pioneer Club on Wednesday nights, a ministry that reaches out to the community children who do not attend church. That experience led to some participation in junior high Sunday school and youth group.

Kuhns says he wasn't sure where Matt stood with a lasting commitment to Christ, but he saw signs Matt responded to God. After attending junior high Sunday school, he got heavily involved in skateboarding and stopped coming to Manson Mennonite. Kuhns lost track of him but reconnected with the family again after ministering to Matt's grandfather.

"I remember Matt being open and sensitive as a junior higher when we talked to the youngsters about making a commitment," Kuhns says. "I'd be surprised if he hadn't made some kind of significant connection with God as a result of the exposure he received.

"Many of his friends told about how generous Matt was. One of his friends told how he took that grain bin job to help his mother pay for the mortgage on her house so she wouldn't lose it.

"A lot of his skateboarding friends came with their body piercings, tattoos of all kinds—and there was not a tie in the whole place," Kuhns

Herald Press: Thoughtful Reading for the New Year

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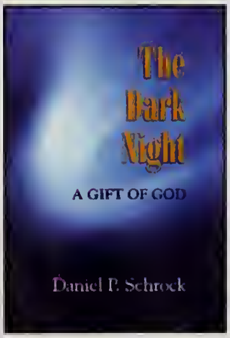

The Dark Night: A Gift of God
Many Christians enter a period when they feel abandoned by God and experience a dryness in their personal lives. **Daniel P. Schrock** demystifies the quite common phenomenon of the dark night, which is often confused with depression. Schrock connects the dark night to Christian discipleship and God's mission of creating shalom. It functions a bit like a second conversion, he writes. The dark night is ultimately a gift from God.
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Longtime pastorate builds trust in community, enables connections.

says. "The parking lot after the service got littered with cigarette butts."

In the face of this funeral crowd, Kuhns says he felt privileged to share Christ's hope.

"I talked about the promise of our Lord and lifted up the importance of what Jesus has accomplished for us," Kuhns says. "The family talked with me about how Matt was a daredevil on the skateboard. So I co-opted this idea, and I dared the crowd to try out faith in the spirit of Matt, the daredevil skateboarder."

Matt's 19-year-old sister challenged Kuhns on his message. She asked him if he really believed all the stuff he had just said about God.

"I told her, 'Yes, even though I have my doubts sometimes, too,'" Kuhns says. "But I also said that when push comes to shove—because of what I've experienced with Christ—this is where I stand. She seemed receptive to what I was saying, but I wasn't able to follow up with her any further before she moved to another community."

Building long-term relationships with families such as Matt's has a strong connection to the church's Pioneer Club ministry, according to Judy Weller, longtime elder.

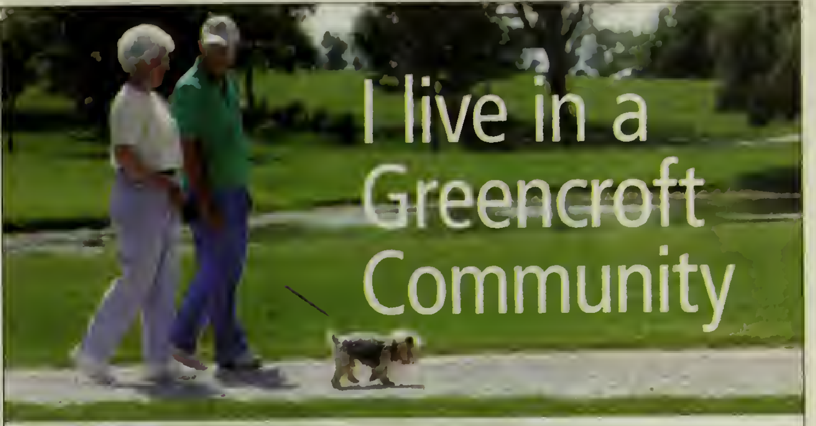
"Through this ministry, many of the kids such as Matt end up going to Sunday school and to our youth group for some part of their lives," Weller says. "We try to expose them to something more stable than they have—often broken homes full of substance abuse, poverty and alcoholism."

She says occasionally parents and aunts and uncles visit Manson Mennonite as a result of the Pioneer Club. Some of these family members have even participated in the congregation's mission trips and attended church.

"It is wonderful to see kids who knew nothing about the Bible rattle off knowledge of all its stories, but we also want to make more significant contact with their parents," she says. "We also want to become part of their lives more than once a week."

Kuhns believes his longtime pastorate (19 years) in the community builds the trust that enables him to connect with people like Matt's family. But he also sees a new growth edge with God.

"It's time we transition from being a 'biological' Mennonite church that welcomes 'visitors' to finding ways to incorporate them into the body life of our church," he says. "Relationships among us are so well established, we don't even realize when we don't include new folks in ways that go beyond the initial welcoming."—*Laurie Oswald Robinson for Mennonite Church USA*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Survey: 'Gather 'Round' usage is strong

Many small denominations unable to continue similar curriculum publishing.

As the *Gather 'Round* curriculum moved into its third year of use (and fifth year of writing), staff and denominational representatives met to evaluate the materials and make plans for the future. A key resource for a November 2008 "summit" was data collected through a major curriculum survey conducted in Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Church Canada and Church of the Brethren congregations across North America.

"We dealt practically with challenging issues such as declining denominational identification and tightening budgets," says project director Anna Speicher, "by coming up with improvements in our products and creatively developing new ways to reach congregations and members."

Gather 'Round is a cooperative publishing project of Brethren Press and Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN).

Participants affirmed the importance of faith formation and Christian education in the life of the church and grappled with the difficulty today in training and equipping teachers. Teachers tend to serve for shorter periods of time and are less available for training events. Though the curriculum from the outset was developed with a special emphasis on "embedding" teacher training into the teacher's guides, the group recognized a need to build even more teaching assistance into the curriculum.

The group learned how sessions in the teacher's guides are being redesigned to streamline the flow and make it easier to follow. Editors are also giving extra attention to age-appropriateness, particularly at the preschool level. In addition, more teacher assistance is being provided through the quarterly *Roundabout* newsletter, an expanded *Roundabout Online* e-newsletter, and recent upgrades to the *Gather 'Round* Web site, www.gatherround.org.

In a wide-ranging conversation about Christian education in a postmodern era, participants reflected on the trend toward small group gatherings outside the traditional Sunday school setting. The *Gather 'Round* team brainstormed ways the curriculum can be adapted for midweek use, church retreats and other alternate settings.

The team was heartened by survey data that showed a high percentage of congregations using denominational curricula. Seventy-five percent of survey respondents said they use *Gather 'Round.* According to MPN sales statistics from the December 2007 to February 2008 quarter, 37 percent of Mennonite Church USA churches and 52 percent of Mennonite Church Canada churches used *Gather 'Round* curriculum. Churches reported placing a higher priority on theological orientation and denominational values than on price.

The *Gather 'Round* project is small compared with other available Sunday school materials, as most small denominations have found it impossible to continue this sort of publishing.

The group also explored ways to keep broadening the base for *Gather 'Round*. This curriculum already appeals to other denominations, and orders on the Web site have increased.
—Mennonite Publishing Network

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Top 5 quirky queries in 2008

Staff who respond to questions sent to 10-year-old Web site Third Way Café of Mennonite Mission Network are rarely surprised by any inquiry. Here are five of the top 10 questions of 2008 (see www.mennonitemission.net for all 10):

Fruitcake anyone? We have new neighbors who are Mennonite. I make wonderful fruitcakes and would like to give one to them. But the fruitcakes spend a month soaking in brandy, and I don't want to cause any awkwardness or discomfort by offering an unacceptable gift. Your advice, please. —*Karen*

Spiritual barbeque? I was looking for Mennonite sites on the Web when I came across yours. I looked at your photo gallery and was shocked to see that although you call yourselves Mennonites, you look like Protestants with people dressing down at church like it's a spiritual barbeque get-together and not a worship of God. Golf clubs have a better dress etiquette.—*[Name withheld]*

How did Mennonites vote? I am managing editor of the national Mennonite paper in the Netherlands: "Doopsgezind NL." Here in Holland we have closely followed the U.S. presidential elections, and I think it is safe to say that most Dutch Mennonites are happy Obama won. At the same time we would like to know how (the majority of) U.S. Mennonites voted. Is there any way to find out?—*Marijke*

Missional vs. disciple-making? I was recently on your Web site reviewing the FAQs. Thought provoking and well done. I have one more question. What is the difference between a "missional church" and a "disciple-making church"? —*Judy*

Why seven sweets and seven sours? I live in Cape Town, South Africa. In some research I have been doing on food culture, reference was made to the Seven Sweets and Seven Sours of Mennonite customs. I can't find any reference to it on your site or any other. Can you tell me what this is?—*Jill*

House of David? My father was a missionary in Navajo Country. When we visited Mennonite missionaries in the Wide Ruins, he referred to them as "House of David." Is there something in the Mennonite tradition that would have led him to call them that?—*Anna*

—*Mennonite Mission Network*

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ITINERARY*

July 12, 2009	Overnight flight to Asunción
July 13	Asunción
July 14-18	MWC Assembly Gathered
July 19	Worship/free time in Asunción
July 20	Hospital Mennonita, Iguassu Falls
July 21	Flight to Lima, Peru
July 22	Lima and Cuzco
July 23	Cuzco and the "Sacred Valley"
July 24	Machu Picchu "Lost City of the Incas"
July 25	Free/Machu Picchu (optional)
July 26-27	Return flight home

Everett Thomas is a veteran of four Mennonite World Conference assemblies and can put your experience with the 2009 Assembly Gathered into the context of the previous 20 years.

*Itinerary is subject to change. For complete details including the tour itinerary, rates and inclusions, please contact:

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Vietnam: members still imprisoned

The legal status recently granted to the Vietnam Mennonite Church was formalized in a government-approved General Assembly held Nov. 15-17, 2008. Before being granted legal status, this group functioned mostly as "house churches." It will now be permitted to build houses of worship, establish training facilities and become partners with other denominations in joint projects, as well as with Mennonite Central Committee.

This new legal status, however, did not include all those in Vietnam who have been drawn to the Mennonite family of faith in recent years. A prior "organizing conference" was held in July 2003 that included 47 church leaders desiring to identify with the Mennonite church.

During the following year several members of this newly organized church were imprisoned following a confrontation with security police at the office and home of Pastor Quang. Pastor Quang was one of those arrested. While he was still in prison, steps were begun by the government to offer legal status to the Mennonite church. A significant number of Pastor Quang's associates chose not to participate in the process because of this and other circumstances that led to a division into two groups. The division has continued to the present. Both groups continue to claim Mennonite identity. However, still more recently, some of Pastor Quang's associates have joined the process of legalization and have become part of the legalized church.

The nonrecognized Mennonite church continued to operate during Pastor Quang's imprisonment. Pastor Quang was released from prison and is now active in organizing training and education programs for church leaders in that church as well as for other nonrecognized evangelical house churches.

As does the recently legalized church, the nonrecognized church has locations where they meet for worship and ministry. They are organized into districts around the country and include many minority believers in addition to ethnic Vietnamese. Although at present the nonrecognized churches enjoy relatively more latitude for their ministries than earlier, several of their members are in prison. These churches have sent a request to the government, signed by 101 leaders, asking for release of imprisoned members on humanitarian grounds. Two people have already been released. The others are reportedly under consideration for release or reduction of sentences.—*Mennonite World Conference*

WORKERS

Hershey, Kurt E., was ordained as associate pastor at Parkesburg Mennonite Church, Parkesburg, Pa., on Nov. 9, 2008.

Hoffer, Jeff, was installed as interim pastor at First Deaf Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Oct. 1, 2008.

Horning, Leslie, was ordained as pastor at Christiansburg Mennonite Fellowship, Christiansburg, Va., on Dec. 14, 2008.

Nolt, Wilmer M., was licensed as deacon at Bowmansville Mennonite Church, Bowmansville, Pa., on Nov. 23, 2008.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Bartel, River Deacon Keim, Nov. 10, 2008, to Ryan and Tonya Keim Bartel, Newton, Kan.

Hill, Kyrstin Renee, Nov. 26, 2008, to Justin and Ashley Bair Hill, Harrisonburg, Va.

Hilty, Madison Sophia, born Oct. 26, 2008, received for adoption on Oct. 30 by Krik and Jenee Winkler Hilty, Orrville, Ohio.

Hunsberger, Logan Raine, Dec. 3, to Kyle and Tina Jantzi Hunsberger, St. Louis, Mo.

Jantzen, Alex Thanh, born Jan. 1, 2007, received for adoption on Sept. 22, 2008 by Eric and Joelle Metz Jantzen, Overland Park, Kan.

Kauffman, Norah Gunden, Oct. 15, 2008, to Seth Kauffman and Angie Gunden, Houston, Texas.

King, Landon O., Oct. 19, 2008, to Chris and Sheila Miller King, Howe, Ind.

Livengood, Aubrey Celine, Oct. 7, 2008, to Aaron and Beth Dayton Livengood, Keyser, W.V.

Martinson, Phoebe Maria, Dec. 4, 2008, to Andrew and Alisa Bardo-Martinson, Minneapolis, Minn.

Maust, Gavin Eugene, Dec. 21, 2008, to Glenn "Ben" and Rhonda Open Maust, Springs, Pa.

Reinford, Gavin Wade, Dec. 30, 2008, to Kendall and Gail Fox Reinford, Pennsburg. Pa.

Rodriguez, Ivan Antonio, Nov. 26, 2008, to Melqui and Jennifer Stutzman Rodriquez, South Bend, Ind.

Schondel, Julianna Christine, Nov. 6, 2008, to Andy and Rebecca Gentry Schondel, Rittman, Ohio.

Swartzendruber, Amity, Oct. 14, 2008, to Corey and Alyson Swartzendruber, Geneva, Neb.

MARRIAGES

Benroth/Sommer: Darby Benroth, Bluffton, Ohio, and Jennifer Sommer, Bluffton, Dec. 13, 2008, at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Chisholm/Wray: Keli Chisholm, Hillsboro, Kan., and Andrew Wray, Newton, Kan., Dec. 27, 2008, at Hesston Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan.

Claassen/Froese: Rebecca Claassen, Moses Lake, Wash., and Beau Froese, Inman, Kan., Dec. 27, 2008, at Menno Mennonite Church, Ritzville, Wash.

Gingerich/Vincent: Julian Gingerich, Hubbard, Ore., and Julia Vincent, Aurora, Ore., Dec. 27, 2008, at Zion Mennonite Church, Hubbard.

Kennel/Price: Kerri Kennel and Scott Price, Dec. 7, 2008, at Salem Mennonite Church, Shickley, Neb.

DEATHS

Albrecht, Oleeda Sutter, 89, Tiskilwa, Ill., died Sept. 8, 2008, of Parkinson's Disease and multiple system atrophy. Spouse: Marion Niles Albrecht. Parents: Levi Samuel and Alma Nafziger Sutter. Children: Arlee Blackburn, Wayne, Connie Krabill, Sylvia Aschliman; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Sept. 13 Willow Springs Mennonite Church, Tiskilwa.

Arner, James Franklin, 92, Louisville, Ohio, died Dec. 24, 2008. Spouse: Loretta M. Krabill Arner (deceased). Parents: Frank and Hazel Kopp Arner. Children: Stanley, Mary Ellen Greek; seven grandchildren; several great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 29 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

Beachy, Leah P., 65, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 28, 2008 of cancer. Parents: Neil E. Beachey and George and Emma Kramer Miller. Funeral: Dec. 20 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Boese, Harold E., 82, Wayland, Iowa, died Dec. 18, 2008. Spouse: Dorothy Roth Boese. Parents: Harris and Eva Reschly Boese. Children: Dean, Kathie Grimm, Karen Bates, Shirley Wade, Annette Boshart, Gary; 19 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 22 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Wayland.

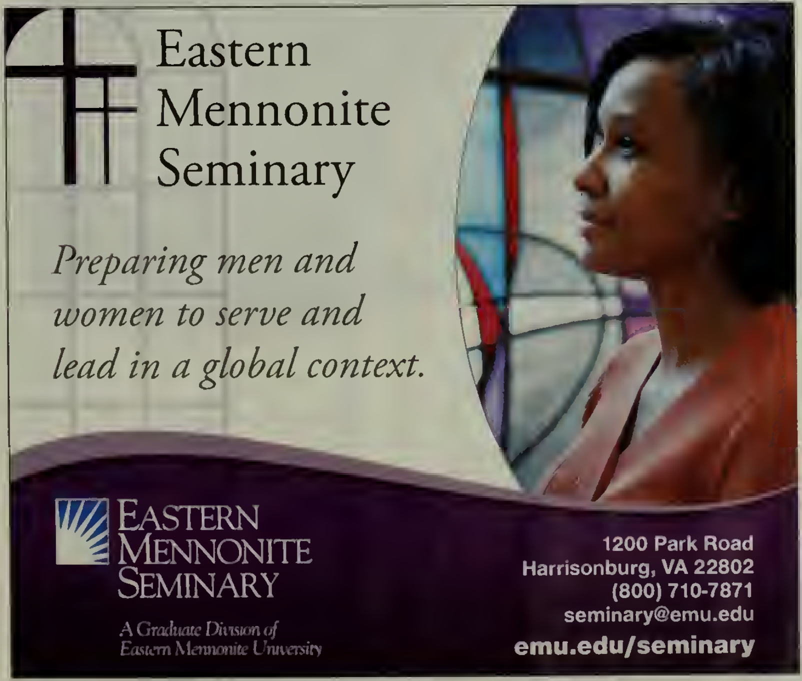
Frey, Warren Edward, 85, Wauseon, Ohio, died Dec. 27, 2008. Spouse: Clara Stuckey Frey. Parents: Edward B. and Fannie Rupp Frey. Children: Jerry, Shirley Rychener, Kathy Poindexter, Samuel, Mara Belle Schmucker, Allen; 16 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 29 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Frobish, Luella Mae Zehr, 96, Flanagan, Ill., died Nov. 17, 2008. Spouse: Thomas Frobish (deceased). Parents: Albert and Ollie Crumrine Zehr. Children: Marilyn Porzelius, Melvin, Lowell, Russell, Paul; 17 grandchildren; 33 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Nov. 22 at Prairieview Mennonite Church, Flanagan.

Gerber, Dean, 88, Walnut Creek, Ohio, died Dec. 26, 2008. Spouse: Grace A. Weaver Gerber (deceased). Parents: Curtis and Mary Mast Gerber. Children: Mary C. Yoder, Paul D., Donna M. Weaver, Carol K. Christner, Darryl R., Janet E. Shoup, Wanda S. Mullet; 15 grandchildren; one step-grandchild; 15 great-grandchildren; one step-great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 30 at Martins Creek Mennonite Church, Millersburg, Ohio.

Goering, Patricia L. Ratzlaff, 73, Wichita, Kan., died Dec. 2, 2008, of cancer. Spouse: Marlo Eugene Goering. Parents: Abraham K. and Anna Balzer Ratzlaff. Children: Tamara, Lori, Robin; two grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 5 at Hope Mennonite Church, Wichita.

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.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Grundman, Milton, 87, Moundridge, Kan., died Dec. 26, 2008, of heart failure. Spouse: Margaret Jantzen Grundman (deceased). Parents: Fred and Carolina Albrecht Grundman. Children: Marlene Klassen, Mike; two grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 30 at First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge.

Halteman, Edith Detwiler, 92, Souderton, Pa., died Dec. 11, 2008. Spouse: Horace A. Halteman (deceased). Parents: Tyson and Lizzie Freed Detwiler. Children: Ruth Rice, Jean Gerber, Marilyn Kroeker; 11 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 17 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Franconia, Pa.

Halteman, Elwood N., 90, Harleysville, Pa., died Dec. 12, 2008. Spouse: Esther F. Halteman. Parents: John S. and Mary Nice Halteman. Children: Harold, Mary Ellen Hartman, Elaine Rittenhouse, Arlin; 19 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 18 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Franconia, Pa.

Hershey, Sanford E., 87, Gordonville, Pa., died Dec. 19, 2008. Spouse: Mae Eby Hershey (deceased). Parents: Martin R. and Susan Eby Hershey. Children: Sharon M. Hershey, Carl E., Sue A. Martin, Andrew, Sylvia M. Martin; 14 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 24 at Hershey Mennonite Church, Kinzers, Pa.

Hostetler, Marvin E., 98, Orrville, Ohio, died Nov. 26, 2008. Spouse: Doris Newcomer Hostetler. Parents: Daniel C. and Elizabeth Bixler Hostetler. Children: Duane, Jerald; 10 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren; seven great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 1 at Martins Mennonite Church, Orrville.

Kanagy, Orpha I. Grassmyer, 77, Belleville, Pa., died Dec. 27, 2008. Spouse: Irvin Kanagy. Parents: J. Carl and Anna Yoder Grassmyer. Children: Carl Yoder. Funeral: Dec. 30 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

King, Harold Richard, 96, Stuarts Draft, Va., died Dec. 16, 2008. Spouse: Genevieve M. King. Parents: Abraham and Alice Hartzler King. Children: D. Wayne, Carol King Bowers, Arnold, Sue King Brittle; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 19 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.

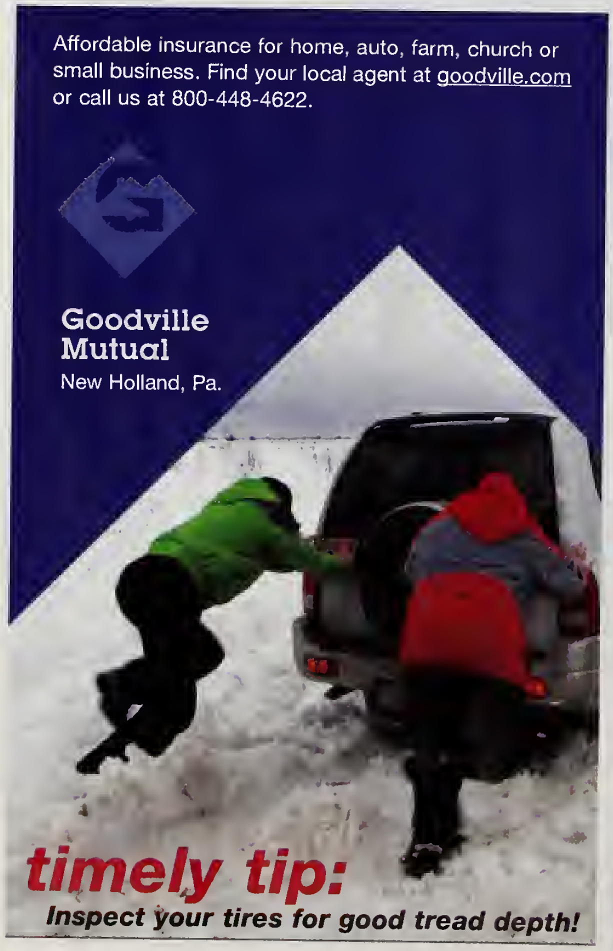
Knarr, Irma Derstine Gahman, 70, Bechtelsville, Pa., died Dec. 15, 2008, of cardiac arrest. Spouse: Allen Lichty Knarr. Parents: Harvey S. and Maggie Derstine Gahman. Children: Kenton, Kristal; six grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 19 at Rockhill Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Markley, Effie Hashbarger, 99, Orrville, Ohio, died Dec. 10, 2008, following a long period of declining health. Spouse: David Markley (deceased). Parents: Reuben and Mary Yoder Hashbarger. Funeral: Dec. 13 at Gresser Funeral Home, Orrville.

Miller, Wilma Huetta Unrau, 88, Reedley, Calif., died Dec. 12, 2008. Spouse: John Miller. Parents: Peter and Helena Unrau. Children: Larry, Randy, Charlene Arnst, Nora Schwartz, Cora Voran, Cindy Epp; 14 grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 19 at First Mennonite Church, Reedley.

Moyer, Russell F., 92, Souderton, Pa., died Dec. 9, 2008. Spouse: Roberta Souder Moyer. Parents: Abram A. and Lizzie Freed Moyer. Children: Dolores Kratz, Sanford, Ferne Motto; eight grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 13 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Schmucker, Evelyn Joy Lederman, 90, Stryker, Ohio, died Dec. 20, 2008. Spouse: Raymond Schmucker. Parents: Daniel and Catherine Neuhouser Lederman. Children: Jeanine Stuckey, Kendra Bernath, Kelly Schmucker; two grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 24 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker.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Shantz, Stanley, 88, Cambridge, Ontario, died Jan. 2 of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Eral Cressman Shantz. Spouse: Doris Hachborn Shantz (deceased). Parents: David and Salome Schmitt Shantz. Children: Jeanne Leis, Lois Broda; Ross, Larry, Paul Brubacher, Elizabeth Setzkorn, Margaret Griffin; nine grandchildren; nine step-grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 6 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, Ontario.

Snyder, Dorcas Fern Garber, 87, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 20, 2008. Spouse: Paul Devon Snyder (deceased). Parents: Leander and Anna Leinbach Garber. Children: Rolene Gingerich, Janice Monschein, Bonnie Kirkdorffer, Ellen Bradley, Karen Snyder, Ronda Snyder, Peggy Goggins, Jerry, Fred, Charles; 19 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 23 at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Stoltzfus, Ruth Brunk.,93, Harrisonburg, Va., died Dec. 2, 2008. Spouse: Grant M. Stoltzfus (deceased). Parents: George and Katie Wenger Brunk. Children: Allen Stoltzfus, Eugene Stoltzfus, Kathryn Stoltzfus Fairfield, Ruth Stoltzfus Jost, Helen Greenberg Stoltzfus; 12 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral Dec. 6 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Swartzendruber, Wayne Herbert, 79, Hesston, Kan., died Dec. 20, 2008 following a struggle with Parkinson's, leukemia and a stroke. Spouse: Margie Lu Hostetler Swartzendruber. Parents: George and Grace Snyder Swartzendruber. Children: Elbert, Karl, Jan Swartzendruber; two grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; eight step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 10 at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston.

Wedel, Vernelle Augusta Tieszen, 87, Moundridge, Kan., died Dec. 20, 2008, in her sleep. Spouse: Harvey R. Wedel (deceased). Parents: Jacob F. and Augusta Voth Tieszen. Children: Donna Bradbury, Rebecca Moddelmog, Joetta Green, Eunice Opat, Ruth Ann Carey; 11 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 26 at First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge, Kan.

Widmer, Mary Lois Swartzendruber, 81, Williamsburg, Iowa, died Nov. 29, 2008, of complications of Alzheimers. Spouse: Clayton John Widmer (deceased). Parents: John A. and Katie Yoder Swartzendruber. Children: Lamarr, Kent, Dan, Dave; six grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 6 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa.

Wyse, Mary Eliza Wenger, 87, Kalona, Iowa, died Dec. 25, 2008, of leukemia. Spouse: Vernon J. Wyse (deceased). Parents: Dave and Katie Roth Wenger. Children: Elmer J., Kathryn M. Couch, Shirley A. Oswald, Linda D. Stump; nine grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 29 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa.

Yoder, Frances Amstutz, 80, Dalton, Ohio, died Dec. 21, 2008. Spouse: David A. Yoder. Parents: Allen and Lovina Steiner Amstutz. Children: Glenn, Jon, James, Lucy McAloose. Funeral: Dec. 24 at Martins Mennonite Church, Orrville, Ohio.

Yoder, Thelma Weaver, 95, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 14, 2008. Spouse: Lowell Yoder (deceased). Parents: Mahlon S. and Clara Blosser Weaver. Children: Keith, Kermit, Ken; 10 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 22 at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Zook, Ruth O. Janzen, 85, Newton, Kan., died Dec. 23, 2008. Spouse: Robert Zook (deceased). Parents: Rudolph and Mathilda Schmidt Janzen. Children: James, Darlene Buller; four grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 27 at Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, Kan.

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Vineland United Mennonite Church invites applications for the ***full-time position of lead minister***. We are a congregation of 220 active members located in a growing semirural community in the heart of the Niagara Peninsula. Our church is seeking a transformational pastor to assist our congregation in implementing our vision for the future. The successful candidate will be committed to an Anabaptist understanding of faith and theology, deeply rooted in biblical teaching, a strong preacher and willing to work as part of the leadership team. Candidates should have previous pastoral experience and possess a desire to foster local outreach. Please submit inquiries, resumés and references to: Vineland United Mennonite Church, 3327 Menno St., Vineland, ON L0R 2C0, Attn: Mike Hendriks; or Email mkhendriks@sympatico.ca.

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First Mennonite Church, Indianapolis, seeks ***full-time associate pastor of youth ministries and pastoral care***. Start date February 2009 or later; job description at www.indymenno.org. We are an Equal Opportunity Employer. Please contact IN-MI Mennonite Conference minister Nancy Kauffmann; nancy@im.mennonite.net.

Eastern Mennonite University announces a ***full-time, continuing faculty position in teacher education***. Ph.D. or Ed.D. in teacher education; early childhood/elementary teaching experience required. Teacher licensure, higher education experience, scholarly research and knowledge of NCATE preferred. Responsibilities include providing leadership in an NCATE-accredited early childhood/elementary teacher education program grounded in the liberal arts, teaching undergraduate courses in methods (social studies), foundations, literacy, children's literature; graduate teaching in M.A. in Education program; advising; field experience supervision; collaboration with other disciplines across campus. The successful candidate will have a commitment to the department's mission to prepare competent, caring, reflective practitioners who advocate for children and youth, develop caring learning environments, initiate and respond creatively to change, value service to others, and integrate theory and practice in diverse classrooms. Participation in scholarly activities and engagement in department, university and community service expected. Salary and rank determined by education and experience. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial acceptable) and three letters of reference to Dr. Marie S. Morris, Vice President and Undergraduate Academic Dean, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802; http://www.emu.edu. Email: ugdean@emu.edu. Application review begins immediately. Position will begin Fall 2009. EMU reserves the right to fill the position at any time or keep the position open. AAEO employer. We seek applicants who bring gender, ethnic and cultural diversity.

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Eastern Mennonite University announces a ***full-time, continuing faculty position in biomedical sciences.*** Ph.D. preferred, A.B.D. considered. Must show evidence or promise of teaching excellence and ability to engage undergraduates in original research. Responsibilities include teaching microbiology and immunology and additional courses that may include molecular biology, biochemistry, introductory biology or chemistry, and a course in the candidate's area of specialization. Student advising of preprofessional health majors and university service expected. Salary and rank determined by education and experience. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, graduate transcripts (unofficial acceptable), statement of teaching philosophy, statement of research interests and names of three references to Dr. Marie S. Morris, Vice President and Undergraduate Academic Dean, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802; http://www.emu.edu. Email: ugdean@emu.edu. Review begins Feb. 1. EMU reserves the right to fill the position at any time or keep the position open. AAEO employer. We seek applicants who bring gender, ethnic and cultural diversity.

Bethel Mennonite Church of West Liberty, Ohio, seeks applicants for our ***half-time youth pastor position.*** Successful candidates will be committed to the way of Jesus Christ and Scriptures, with a heart for youth and a commitment to Anabaptist theology and practice. Interested applicants may submit their MLI or direct questions to Pastor Dave Maurer at bethelpastor@2access.net or call 937-465-4587.

The C. Henry Smith Trust directors announce the ***34th annual C. Henry Smith Peace Lecture.*** A committee composed of the directors of peace studies and academic deans of **Goshen College** and **Bluffton University** will select a scholar to prepare and present a peace lecture in the colleges and churches during the 2009-10 academic year. The C. Henry Smith Peace Lectureship is interpreted broadly to include related media through which the peace witness can be communicated, such as drama, story and visual art as well as a more formal lecture. The lectureship should highlight a distinctive Anabaptist peace perspective. For information about eligibility, stipend and application submission contact the Goshen College academic dean's office at dean@goshen.edu, the Bluffton University academic dean's office at colliers@bluffton.edu, or on line at http://www.bluffton.edu/audience/campus/facresources/chenry/. The deadline for completed applications is Feb. 16.

Eastern Mennonite University announces a ***full-time, continuing faculty position in computer science.*** Ph.D. preferred, master's degree in CS or CIS with a related doctorate also considered. Responsibilities include teaching introductory to advanced level computer science, with a vision for continued growth in our CS major. Student advising and university service expected. Ongoing professional experience/scholarship. Salary and rank determined by education and experience. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial acceptable) and three letters of references to Dr. Marie S. Morris, Vice President and Undergraduate Academic Dean, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802; http://www.emu.edu. Email: ugdean@emu.edu. Application review begins immediately. Position will begin Fall 2009 or Fall 2010. EMU reserves the right to fill the position at any time or keep the position open. AAEO employer. We seek applicants who bring gender, ethnic and cultural diversity.

The Mennonite Heritage Cruise and its international resource team invites you to join the ***15th annual cruise in Ukraine on the Dnieper River and Black Sea*** in late September 2009. This has been the ultimate 15-day roots discovery experience for 2,500 descendants of Russian Mennonites and others. For details of the cruise Google "Mennonite Heritage Cruise" or phone Marina Unger 800-387-1488, ext. 2827.

Mountville Mennonite Church (Lancaster Mennonite Conference) seeking ***full-time associate pastor for youth ministry*** with training or experience in youth ministry and discipleship, commitment to Anabaptist core values and passion for reaching unchurched youth. Starting Summer 2009. Applications requested by March 1. Contact: Jim Herr jcjbc5@aol.com; 717-285-2153.

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The Shack: simplistic, didactic, wildly popular

Gordon Houser

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

First, *The Shack* is a phenomenon. This novel, published by a small publisher, Windblown Media, now has more than 2 million copies in print. The author, William P. Young, gets nearly 100 emails per day from readers inspired by its story.

Second, the book has critics who dislike its theology, which includes a form of universalism.

Third, as fiction, it is terribly written.

The novel's narrative derives in part from Young's own experience. According to a *USA Today* interview, he was born in Canada to missionaries who brought him as an infant to New Guinea to live with the primitive Dani tribe. He says he was subject to the harsh verbal attacks of his unhappy father and sexual assaults by tribesmen. He went to a missionary boarding school at age 6, he says, and was molested by older students.

When he was 25, his 18-year-old brother died in a work accident, the mother of Kim, his wife, died unexpectedly, and his niece, 5 years and one day old, was run over by a cement truck while riding her new birthday bicycle. Thirteen years later, after committing adultery, he spent a year in counseling, years more soul-searching, marveling at Kim's steadfast commitment, before he reached wholeness in faith, he says. She prompted him to deal with his pain, and he wrote *The Shack* in 2005.

The novel tells the story of Mack, whose young daughter Missy is abducted and murdered by a serial killer in a shack in the woods of Oregon. Years later, Mack, still devastated, receives a note inviting him back to the shack. It's signed "Papa," the name his more resilient and spiritual wife, Nan, uses for God.

He goes to the shack and meets Papa, "a large black woman," Sarayu, "a small, distinctively Asian woman," and Jesus, who "appeared Middle Eastern and was dressed like a laborer."

Despite the seemingly audacious step of using such anthropomorphisms for the Trinity (misleading though they be, since only the Son was incarnated), the descriptions are simple and clichéd, what is called lazy writing.

These three characters, plus a woman named Wisdom, who makes an appearance later, spend the weekend teaching Mack about the nature of God and the meaning of his daughter's death. Much of the book consists of this relentless preaching, which you might expect at church but is a death knell to good fiction.

In fact, this book breaks many of the rules for fiction writing. Some examples:

- It begins with a description of the weather.
- It uses generalities, e.g., "Everyone understands and shares in this singular justification."
- It uses unnecessary dialogue.
- It gives characters colloquial speech without cause ("Do ya need me to have him call ya?")
- It uses unnecessary explanation.

That's just in the first 30 pages. Then I quit keeping track.

OK, I'm sensitive, since I love good fiction. What about the book's teaching? It basically teaches that God is full of grace and doesn't reject anyone. Such teaching is defensible and useful. At the same time, God apparently has no use for religious institutions. There is no communal or political element to the book's teaching, no church.

The Shack is popular, I imagine, because it uses story to speak to heartfelt issues, including why God allows suffering. But there are so many better-told stories out there, including those in the Bible. And the Bible includes nuance and mystery and is much better written. Yet many people seem to prefer this kind of book.

I prefer the Bible. TM

FILMS

Milk (R) is Gus Van Sant's biopic of Harvey Milk, California's first openly gay elected official, a San Francisco supervisor who was assassinated along with Mayor George Moscone by San Francisco Supervisor Dan White. Milk's persistence in pursuing human rights for gay people blends with his troubled love life. Sean Penn's performance is brilliant.—*gh*

Slumdog Millionaire (R) follows a young Indian man, Jamal Malik, from his painful childhood in the slums of Mumbai to his spellbinding appearance on the Indian version of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire." The powerful camera work takes viewers through hectic slums to the Taj Mahal through the eyes of street kids ("slumdogs"). Contrasted with his older brother's draw toward violence and greed, Jamal's determination and love inspires viewers. The film follows this beautiful story—perhaps flawed only by its too-neat ending.—*Anna Groff*

BOOKS

Put Down Your Sword: Answering the Gospel Call to Creative Nonviolence by John Dear (Eerdmans, 2008, $16) carries on Dear's work as a relentless, articulate proponent of creative nonviolence. He calls his latest book "some musings, reflections, lessons and observations from my recent journeys and experiments with gospel nonviolence." He offers biblical and theological insights as well as stories from his and others' experiences in practicing nonviolence.

The Kings and Their Gods: The Pathology of Power by Daniel Berrigan (Eerdmans, 2008, $20) is another of Berrigan's commentaries on Old Testament books, this one on 1 and 2 Kings. In his usual poetic way, he comments on the Bible while keeping in front of us our contemporary situation. The comparisons are striking. The pathology of power existed then and now, both with disastrous results.

DVDS

Encounters at the End of the World (G), a documentary about Antarctica, uses stunning photography, interviews and commentary to explore the implications found there for the possible end of humankind.

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Everett J. Thomas

Seminaries as seedbeds

Mennonite Church USA needs its seminaries now more than ever, and Mennonite congregations will best serve the future by calling ministers who have been trained—preferably with a Master of Divinity degree—through one of the many Mennonite seminary programs.

The word "seminary" comes from the Middle English "seedbed" and is defined as "an environment in which something originates and from which it is propagated." Any group must have ways to pass on its values; seminaries are one of the important ways we propagate our faith.

Our pastor-training schools and programs are places where notions of good preaching and solid Anabaptist theology are being planted. From this soil will sprout the preachers and pastors of tomorrow. To understand how important these seedbeds are, imagine what it would be like without them: Congregations would need to find pastors from any Christian tradition that seems a close approximation to what we believe.

It is possible for a congregation to find a pastor trained through some other school that is a fine preacher, has a pastor's heart and solidly supports the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. I have had several such pastors and been blessed by them. But from a systemic point of view, relying on such finds is risky.

Our pastor-training schools are planting notions of good preaching and solid Anabaptist theology.

A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership (Faith & Life Press, 1996) is one of our formation documents that describes who may receive a ministerial credential. The statement is clear in its call for pastors to be trained with a Master of Divinity degree through one of our seminaries.

"A Master of Divinity degree is highly recommended and encouraged for those in pastoral ministry," says the statement in its "Qualifications for Ministry" section. "A clear grasp and understanding of Anabaptist-Mennonite identity, theology and faith is assumed as well."

It is doubtful that any seminary other than those belonging to our denomination will provide this identity, theology and faith. This means that students studying in the programs offered by our seminaries (see page 12) are the seed stock for congregational leadership over the next decades. As these leaders grow and their ministry bears fruit in congregational life, it will be a harvest we recognize as being Anabaptist.

Last October, the campus pastor at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., alerted us to an increase in seminarians preparing for ministry.

"This year, the number of young seminary students at AMBS exploded," wrote Janeen Bertsche Johnson, "and most of them are entering the M.Div. program. Not all of them will end up in congregational ministry, but a significant number are headed that way. We are very excited about this trend and want to see these talented, committed young adults serving the church."

This is encouraging news. Since many current pastors will be retiring in the next decade, it is vital that these young leaders are being nurtured to replace them. In 20 years, when most of our pulpits are filled by the next generation of pastors, what they preach and the church history they know will have continuity with the Anabaptist-Mennonite identity, theology and faith that is the essence of our church today.—*ejt*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

Special issue is coming

The next issue of *The Mennonite*, dated Feb. 3, will be unique in several ways. First, it is the direct result of a 2007 Delegate Assembly action calling our denomination to consider what it means to be part of the United States of America. We call it our "national identity issue." The usual 32-page format will be expanded to 40 pages and will include a centerspread poster.

"We are greatly blessed to live in the United States," says task force and Executive Board member Terry Shue, "yet we are also confronted with the challenge to be faithful in following Jesus in a world that is not."

Mennonite Church USA's Executive Leadership has invested heavily in the Feb. 3 issue and calls all congregations to use the material for extended study.—*ejt*

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February 3, 2009

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The place God has planted me

James Schrag is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

I love my country. Some readers may be encouraged to hear me say that. Others may wonder if I have lost my moorings as a Mennonite-Anabaptist. There is both "promise and peril" (as the resolution from the 2007 Delegate Assembly in San José suggests) as we determine how to "live faithfully as Christians in the U.S.A." The precious part of the promise for me is the religious freedom we enjoy, known by Anabaptists since our arrival in Penn's colony in 1683. There is peril in this same freedom when we are tempted to wed the aims of our government and our cultural values with God's intention.

In the late 1960s we lived in Kenya, East Africa, participants in MCC's Teachers Abroad Program. I enjoyed listening to Voice of America on shortwave radio. It was news from "home" and spoken in American English, different from the African English or the British English I heard around me. I read the entire international edition of *Newsweek*. It was like a letter from home.

I learned in my early 20s in Kenya that I am and always will be an American. At our school, we Americans were expected to bring something good to our students to help them be healthy, wealthy and wise. But because we were American, some held us in suspicion. One African teacher told me that he assumed all Americans at our school were informants for the CIA.

In those years of reading *Newsweek*, I learned of the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. Our government boasted putting a man on the moon. I read about the Kent State shootings of student protesters of the Vietnam War. I was in East Africa in part to obey American law in my alternative service obligation to Uncle Sam because of that war.

Because I love my home, my love for country did not abate, though often I was angry with my country and wept for it. Often I was embarrassed in my attempts to explain my country to students and fellow teachers. But I don't remember denying who I was—I was an American.

In 1999, before the birth of Mennonite Church USA, a difficult debate occurred at the combined Mennonite Church-General Conference Mennonite Church convention in St Louis. Should we be called Mennonite Church USA? We took our cues from Mennonite Church Canada and decided we needed a parallel name. But people agonized: Should we be a national rather than a binational church? Should we "separate" from Canada?

I'm glad we acknowledged who we are. Had we not decided to be a national church, we would not be able to ask the important questions of faithfulness as Christians in the USA at any convention, let alone engage in a churchwide study.

We are far from having one mind about our earthly citizenship. We are more political than our forebears. This moment of history is crucial. We have experienced a change of power and direction in Washington. The stock market has crashed, unemployment is increasing, and we hold on to what we have, born of anxiety about the future. We are still mired in two foreign wars of our making.

I love my country—not for its wars or for its occasional arrogance toward others. I love it because it is my home—the place God has placed me to live a life committed to Christ—to offer a foretaste of his reign on earth and in heaven. America is my mission field, where I can see God at work and join God in that work. Mennonite Church USA is my church—its entire name a reminder of my place, my identity and my call to witness. As God's agent of God's healing and hope to all, I love the place God has planted me.

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

TheMennonite

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Cover: Photo by Peter Anderson

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Allegiance to Christ, not United States

The journey that has resulted in this issue of *The Mennonite* began with a national identity resolution prompted by the 2007 Delegate Assembly in San José. Delegates had heard a powerful sermon about Joseph in Genesis 37-50 by Jennifer Davis Sensenig, now pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va., called "Enlisted: Called to Claim God's Power" (see Jennifer's sermon at www.MennoniteUSA.org/identity). She wondered what it meant for us as citizens of the United States to live God's call today; so did delegates. They asked the Executive Board to help the church "explore our identity as Mennonites living in what many consider to be the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth." Delegates asked for resources that help them live faithfully in Christlike ways.

We are grateful for the staff of *The Mennonite* in helping make this special issue possible. The stories you find here are just a sample of the resources you will find at www.MennoniteUSA.org/identity: sermons, worship service outlines, study questions, dramas, study articles, congregational stories and more. Additional copies of this issue of *The Mennonite* are available for $3 each (discount for bulk orders) by calling 800-790-2498. Many of the articles are also available in Spanish.

We hope these resources will help you and your congregation think more about what it means to give our primary allegiance to Christ. I hope you'll plan to join the Delegate Assembly in Columbus, Ohio, June 30–July 5 for the Mennonite Convention, where we'll be able to talk together about our experiences with these study materials and think more about where God is calling us as Mennonite Church USA congregations and conferences.—*Ron Byler, associate executive director, Mennonite Church USA*

Best moment for this conversation

I have corresponded occasionally with Terry Shue over the past 15-18 months in an effort to inform his leadership of the Mennonite Church USA process around national identity. Here is the letter I sent to Shue on Jan. 14:

You've come to mind several times this week, you and our church's exploration of its identity. Maybe it's that feeling I have of looking in the mirror every time I pay attention to what Israel is doing to the people in Gaza. The manufactured sense of crisis, the propaganda, the use of terror against civilians, the reflexive way so many of Israel's citizens rally in support of terror attacks on the innocent; it all is so reminiscent of our country and Iraq. The United States and Israel are using the same playbook.

Or maybe it's that [Jan. 13], the dead Osama bin Laden issued a new call for jihad, followed by the President-elect's statement that "Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda are our number one threat when it comes to American security"—followed this evening by President Bush's farewell speech replete with multiple references to 9/11. How insecure we are and yet how freedom-loving.

I keep thinking about the materials you are preparing for us to use in February (and thereafter) to examine our identity. Will those materials acknowledge that our national identity has become an ugly lie? To do that, you would need to get into the specifics that make it so, a controversial step, to be sure. To avoid the ugly facts and instead cover our dilemma with pieties will only deepen our passivity and slumber.

God be with you.

On a more encouraging note, this moment more than any other in my lifetime is teachable with regard to the principalities and powers and their penchant for deception. The deliberate lies about Iraq, torture and the value of Wall Street financial instruments have been revealed in an uncommonly open way. No, still not in the Associated Press articles that fill our local newspapers but in enough other places that many of us are starting to notice. So maybe this is the best moment for this national identity conversation to occur; we may now be more open to the challenge than is typically the case.

This task you have undertaken is not the kind of work that can bear fruit if managed and administered and carefully contained like any garden-variety resolution. So create some space for prophetic voices from outside the structure. Let those voices be part of the Spirit's work. Thank you, as always, for hearing me out.—*Berry Friesen, Lancaster Pa.*

IN THIS ISSUE

One of the tasks assigned to *The Mennonite* through our denominational bylaws includes supporting identity-building for Mennonite Church USA. As our church struggles to understand what it means to be a national church in the United States, this 40-page special issue is devoted to this identity building. As J. Nelson Kraybill says in the cover story (page 8), we are positioned in the heart of the empire, just as first-century Christians in the Roman empire. How much allegiance this empire deserves is at the heart of our discernment, and Anna Groff reports how some Mennonite teachers respond to expectations that they say the Pledge of Allegiance in their classrooms (page 28). We hope you will take the poster from the center spread and display it prominently.—*Editor*

Are we easy targets for predators?
Thank you for publishing the story of Andrew Eggman's indictment on charges of producing child pornography and "taking indecent liberties with a child" ("Former Mission Worker Indicted," Jan. 6). It is an important affirmation for parents and young people whose intuition told them he was not a safe, trustworthy man, even though he had been ordained in another denomination and had worked for a Mennonite mission agency. This sad story illustrates again the importance of learning why a pastor may have left his previous denomination. Are we a too-easy target for predators?—*Carolyn Heggen, Corvallis, Ore.*

Read Menno's 'The New Birth'
I appreciate the article by Lawrence Ressler, "I Finally Read Menno" (Jan. 6). I, too, found reading Menno Simons inspiring, though I have not read his complete works. "The New Birth" should be a must-read for everyone joining the Mennonite church and would bless any new Christian of any denomination. I would like to suggest a column in *The Mennonite*, in each issue, with some of the writings of Menno Simons.—*Wayne D. Lawton, Elizabethtown, Pa.*

Obama and the imperial machine
We have a U.S. President who is making all attempts to keep everyone pleased. This signals a shift from far-left and far-right politics to a more centrist angle, connoting that politicians can actually agree to disagree. While I remember picking this up in about second grade, others are less apt to take that stance. But argument can strengthen a position to either side, and people should not shy away from heated but respectful debate. Centralized politicking could do a lot worse than ease tensions in the polarized nation after the last eight years of coercion, cronyism and bloodshed.

In the same way, the church should not get embroiled in the worries of the world. The church has its own politics, and claiming deific vengeance on anyone who fails to follow our thinking is not the best way to gain followers. This particular Mennonite believes that the church, by Christ's own admonition, should "be in the world but not of it." While there can be no true peace on the world, there can be small measures of peace in the church.

Historically, Anabaptists—and more directly Mennonites—have been advocates of settling differences without recourse to bloodshed. For those who claim to follow Christ under the tenants laid down by those before us, it will take radical ideas to continue to keep this world on the way of the Lord. To some, Barack Obama may seem to be the second coming. Remember, he is still a piece of the imperial machine.—*C.J. Irelan, Elkhart, Ind.*

Oyer's work in France benefits us
Thank you for the reflection from Linda Oyer examining unity and diversity ("Praising God With Our Diversity," Jan. 6). Since 1988, Oyer's mission work in France through Mennonite Mission Network and predecessor agencies has benefited the churches of North America and Europe. Her message of unity through diversity is fitting as denominations on both sides of the pond experience growth and changing demographics.—*Ryan Miller, editorial director, Mennonite Mission Network*

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Did you watch the presidential inauguration? (43 votes)

○ I watched it live. (70%)
○ I did not watch it. (14%)
○ I was there. (9%)
○ I watched replays. (7%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

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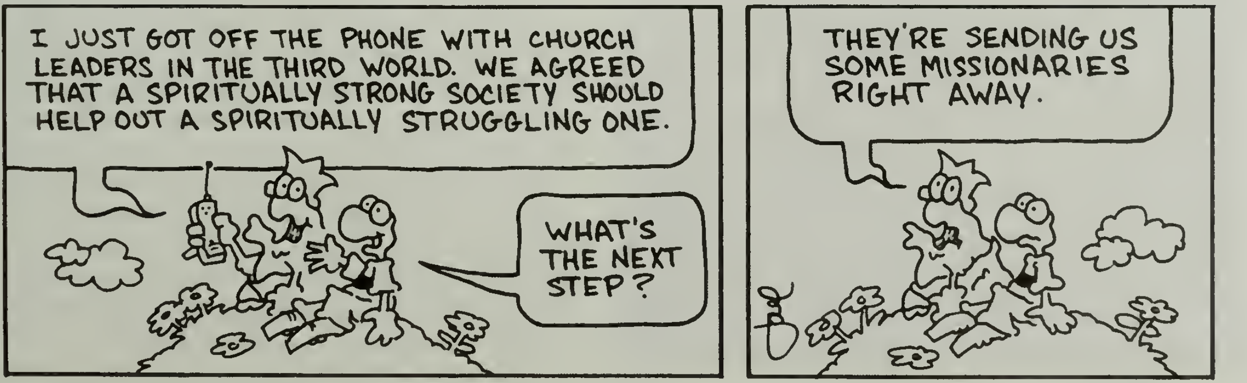
Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**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WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?
THEY'RE SENDING US SOME MISSIONARIES RIGHT AWAY.

IN BRIEF

MMA offering scholarships

Mennonite Mutual Aid is offering the $2,500 Howard Brenneman Scholarship, three $1,500 scholarships, 10 $1,000 scholarships, and 22 $500 scholarships. For details, the essay question and application materials, visit MMA-online.org. The applications must be postmarked Feb. 28. *—MMA*

Bankrupt churches

Churches are increasingly finding themselves in the same financial bind as home owners. According to one study of 115 counties in the United States, 0.31 percent of churches have received foreclosure notices, but the percentage is much higher when churches without mortgages are excluded from the data. In many of these cases the lenders were betting on the assumption that the congregations would grow in size and so have larger budgets to draw on for paying off mortgages. The lenders also assumed that churches would feel a moral obligation to pay off their creditors. While some say church attendance tends to increase during hard times, newer congregants don't give as much money as longer-standing ones. One bit of good news for churches that lose their buildings: they usually are able to find facilities to rent.*—The Christian Century*

Mennonite Church USA boards tighten belts

NEWTON, Kan.—Mennonite Church USA, its schools and agencies are seeing some of the effects of the recession, especially in decreased value of investments. But charitable giving has remained relatively stable for many institutions. Yet leaders are tightening belts and exercising caution to prepare for financial uncertainties.

"I anticipate that calendar year 2009 is going to be a difficult one," says Marty Lehman, Mennonite Church USA director of communication and development. "I have heard from several congregations who are concerned about how they are going to meet their budgets."

The denomination's Executive Leadership staff and programs are less affected. They do not have many investments, and charitable giving as of Dec. 31, 2008, was about the same as last year.

Additionally, registrations are up for the July Columbus convention: 3,461 people had registered by Dec. 31, compared with 2,575 by Dec. 31, 2006.

However, Lehman aims to reduce the Executive Leadership budget by 10 percent as the Executive Board looks again this month at the budget it preliminarily approved in September (see page 27).

For several Mennonite Church USA agencies, the situation is mixed.

Mennonite Mutual Aid's losses in the stock and bond markets were less than $2 million as of September. MMA is making some budget cuts by trimming educational training and travel expenses, according to Judy Martin Godshalk, a spokeswoman for MMA. However, MMA's overall financial condition is still stable and strong due to reserve funds, Godshalk writes in an email.

Mennonite Publishing Network, which eliminated its debt a year and a half ago, does not rely on investment, says Ron Rempel, executive director. Instead, 95 percent of its revenue is from sales and 5 percent from fund-raising for publications important to the two churches MPN serves, Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada.

MPN is on track to meet its fund-raising goals, Rempel says. But in sales he has seen decreases in the two markets to which it sells products.

Mennonite schools are looking for ways to address the loss of value in their endowments. More than 20 Mennonite Church USA institutions have money in the Mennonite Education Agency Investment Fund. The fund's value was $139 million as of Sept. 30, 2008, compared with $180 million a year before, although the changed value includes causes other than market decline, according to MEA. The Investment Committee pays each institution 5 percent of that institution's share of the fund's average market value over 40 quarters—or about 10 years. "In a time like this, everybody is pleased that we've had that policy," says Carlos Romero, MEA executive director. "It averages out for the bad years, so the impact is not as severe."*—Mennonite Weekly Review*

Jim and Anna Ralph

Trauma seminar offers healing for Kenyans

Kenyan women from the Kisumu East, Nairobi and Lakeside Dioceses minister to one another during a trauma healing seminar led by Jim and Anna Ralph, Eastern Mennonite Missions workers in Ethiopia.*—EMM*

MCC freezes spending, will reduce budget

GOSHEN, Ind.—In a Jan. 21 memo to binational staff and representatives, Mennonite Central Committee's executive director, Arli Klassen, instructed staff to spend only those funds already committed in 2009 and announced that MCC's budget would need to be reduced 10 percent in its next fiscal year. MCC's fiscal year ends March 31.

"We need to cut our expenses significantly," Klassen said. "At this time we expect to have revenue that is $3 million less than the current year."

Klassen said that while general and designated contributions for MCC U.S. are ahead of last year, bequests and relief sales income is significantly lower. Both are behind budget. This means that U.S. contributions shared with MCC's binational organization are significantly lower than budget.

"The dramatic drop in the Canadian-U.S. exchange rate has impacted us the most," she said, "as so much of our revenue comes from Canada. Also the shift to a negative number instead of a positive number in our investment income means one more of our revenue streams is down."

Klassen called for staff to limit spending as much as possible and said, "People who live in countries that are the neediest are the ones who will bear the brunt of these cutbacks. We need to pray for wise discernment on how to best use the funds entrusted to us."*—Everett J. Thomas*

Photo provided

d-driven mission effort supports church in Ecuador
den (left) and Aaron Coffman of Scottdale (Pa.) Mennonite urch display the tray they crafted and sold to raise money support Quito Mennonite Church through a Mennonite ssion Network mission bank project.—*Mennonite Mission twork*

CPT, MCC make statements about Gaza

GAZA—Christian Peacemaker Teams' Palestine team offers this statement on war in Gaza:

- We call on all armed groups to cease killing and traumatizing the children of God.
- We implore our governments to do more to end this massacre in Gaza, including demanding that Israel immediately remove its forces from Gaza and cease aerial bombardment.
- We ask our government representatives to insist that Israel conform to international law.
- We urge our governments and media outlets to press beyond surface explanations as to the cause of this recent conflict between Hamas and Israel and address the "root" problems.

AKRON, Pa.—Tim Seidel, director for Peace and Justice Ministries with Mennonite Central Committee U.S., offers this statement from MCC:

The military strategy that marked Israel's "Operation Cast Lead" only hurt Gaza's civilian population. The obvious disproportionality of this attack only underscores its unacceptability.

In May 2007, a Mennonite Church USA-sponsored delegation visited Palestine-Israel. Afterward, delegation participants wrote "An Open Letter to Mennonite Church USA Congregations" (http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/palestineletter/) that encouraged, among other things:

- Mennonite Church pastors and leaders visit Palestine-Israel and to deepen their understanding of the current situation in this region and congregational groups and Sunday school classes to use study courses that might counter the distortions of land and promise found in Christian Zionism.
- Church institutions gain greater understanding of their investments in this region and avoid ones that violate international law and promote violence.
- Congregations and agencies challenge U.S. military and economic support for the Israeli occupation of Palestine and to advocate for justice and protection of human rights for all people in the region.—*CPT and MCC*

MCC Central States responds to ICE raid effects

AKRON, Pa.—Mennonite Central Committee Central States is helping support the families of people detained in a massive May 12, 2008, immigration raid on the Agriprocessors meatpacking plant in Postville, Iowa. MCC Central States is providing an additional $1,000 grant to First Mennonite Church of Iowa City to help affected families with rent and utilities. This money will be dispersed by St. Bridget's Catholic Church in Postville.—*MCC*

New EMM board structure implemented

SALUNGA, Pa.—A new, smaller board for Eastern Mennonite Missions held its first session Jan. 9 under new bylaws voted into existence by the outgoing 50-plus member board last year. Joe Sherer, pastor of Mount Joy (Pa.) Mennonite Church, continues to serve as board chair. The new board includes members of the previous board's executive committee and several additional members. The new 12- to 14-member board will include eight members from Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference, EMM's primary constituency, and four members from other-than-LMC Anabaptist groups.—*EMM*

Vietnamese Mennonite pastor sentenced

WASHINGTON—Vietnam's authoritarian government has made a habit in recent years of cracking down on dissent around Tet, the lunar new year festival that started last week. This year is no exception. A court in Ho Chi Minh City last week sentenced Mennonite Pastor Nguyen Thi Hong to three years in jail, ostensibly for unpaid debts owed by her deceased first husband. Her lawyer said the debts were already paid. Nguyen's real "crime" was more likely her association with members of an unrecognized branch of the Mennonite church who have engaged in social activism Hanoi views as a threat. Authorities in the past have tried to shut down at least one of the unauthorized branch's "house" churches.—*Wall Street Journal*

—*Compiled by Anna Groff*

IN BRIEF

Moyer joins MEA

Elaine Moyer, current principal of Christopher Dock Mennonite High School in Lansdale, Pa., will join Mennonite Education Agency as an associate director. Moyer, with more than 30 years experience in Mennonite and public education, will begin working for MEA after the end of the 2008-2009 academic year. —*MEA*

Land donated for CMU creation care

By donating the use of more than 700 acres of woodlands, fields and peat bogs to Canadian Mennonite University for the Braintree Creation Care Center, Walter and Elly Loewen hoped to preserve the land for future generations. Their wish will be fulfilled through the collaborative efforts of the university and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The agreement, formally marked at a Jan. 14 celebration, guarantees "that the land will be preserved in perpetuity," said Harvey Sawatzky, who directs the Center. "By working together in this way, CMU and the Nature Conservancy can ensure that this important piece of Manitoba remains in its pristine state for future generations." —*CMU*

Allegiance at

4 ways to turn our allegiance toward God the Creator

by J. Nelson Kraybill

Fault lines appeared within Mennonite Church USA last fall as presidential politics polarized the nation. Sentiments were so strong they sometimes stretched relationships within families and congregations. Mennonites who emphasize Jesus' call to love our enemies supported the candidate they thought most likely to pursue diplomacy. Others supported the candidate they thought most likely to protect the unborn.

Not only in politics are Mennonites tugged by allegiance to something beyond the body of Christ. A substantial part of the denomination today is professional, educated, entrepreneurial or wealthy. In each case we are likely to identify with ideologies and organizations that support our status and interests.

Mennonites get sucked into currents of self-interest and accommodation that pull us away from our deepest identity in Jesus.

Academics join scholarly guilds whose values filter back into our schools and publishing, and business people belong to trade associations that back legislation favorable to their industry. Those with property or wealth want tax policies that protect what they have gained. Some support immigration restrictions that their own forebears did not face.

Mennonites get sucked into currents of self-interest and accommodation that pull us away from our deepest identity in Jesus. Any commitment or ideology that draws us from Christ, from God's people and from radical obedience to God is idolatry. The remedy is repentance and whole-life worship of the living God.

Positioned in the heart of empire: Like Christians of the first-century Roman world, Americans live in an empire that wants our loyalty. We do not like to think of ourselves as living at the hub of empire. But by almost any economic or political measure, the United States is a powerful nation that controls vast resources around the world. If necessary, we invade other countries to protect access to resources we want. We prop up regimes friendly to us in spite of their questionable human rights record.

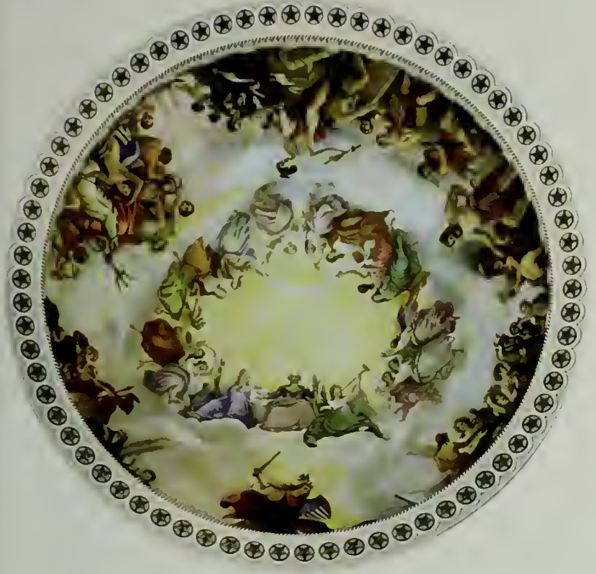
As empires go, the one to which we belong is not worse than many others throughout history. But all empires seek the loyalty of their domestic population and the collaboration of peoples they control. All empires sometimes act in ways that run counter to the gospel. Even when dressed up in garments of democracy or religion, empires will be brutal and selfish when they deem it necessary.

Empires do some things Christians should support: The first-century Mediterranean world enjoyed benefits from the Roman Empire, including an end to piracy and festering war between nations. The Romans developed a global economy and a common monetary system for their world. The apostle Paul counseled believers to respect and pray for imperial rulers, at least when rulers are "not a terror to good conduct" (Romans 13:3). First-century people who embraced this global system, especially if they worshiped the emperor, found some measure of security and perhaps wealth.

The Roman Empire did not have political parties like a modern democracy. But they had organizations to foster allegiance, most notably the widespread order of augustales or priests of emperor worship. At civic and religious settings these people presided at processions extolling the emperor and the empire. Towns and cities built altars or temples to Caesar. Some sponsored choirs to sing praises to the emperor, who claimed titles such as "son of god" and "savior of the world." The book of Revelation is a spirited reply to such idolatry, calling Christians to a counter loyalty that reflects true allegiance to the living God.

We need careful discernment: Christians in America live in an empire known for both humanitarian generosity and military violence. We need careful discernment because this empire sometimes speaks with biblical language. Politicians profess loyalty to Jesus even as they use military force to protect American interests. Others who speak of their Christian faith defend the right of parents to choose whether or not to end the life of their unborn. Parts of our society advance the notion that the Founding Fathers were Christian, a claim few would have made for themselves.

e fault lines



"The Apotheosis (deification) of George Washington," an 1865 painting by Constantino Brumidi, covers 4,664 square feet on the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C. Used with permission, Architect of the Capitol

Americans typically do not worship their leaders, living or dead. But the rotunda of our nation's Capitol features a huge painting called "The Apotheosis (deification) of George Washington" (see above). Like Christ in medieval cathedrals, the first president is seated in glory, illustrating the fine line between patriotism and idolatry.

Many tugs at our loyalty: In countless ways we are drawn into sentiments of allegiance: lapel pins, the national anthem, bumper stickers, Web sites, political phone calls, Fourth of July, the Pledge of Allegiance, battlefield tours, military corporations, political speeches, "God Bless America," voting, advertising and much more. American history gets retold as a sacred narrative.

Not all of the above are idolatrous. But the list is a reminder that we are inundated with pressures for allegiance. In addition to the tsunami of political enticement, an economic hurricane now is realigning allegiances in this nation. A decade ago theologian Harvey Cox wrote an article called "The Market as God" in which he suggested that economic forces had taken the role of religion in our culture, displacing allegiance to God (*The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1999).

Whether the Market meant Wall Street or the invisible hand of supply and demand, we were transfixed by its power and trusted its wisdom. Then came the October 2008 crash, and the Market god proved powerless to save.

Allegiance issues from our own heritage: Mennonites face allegiance temptations even from our own faith heritage. We take peacemaking, service and justice seriously because we follow Jesus, but we are susceptible to making such discipleship expressions ends in themselves. True worship glorifies God, but we sometimes glorify ourselves by advancing only an ideology of peace or justice without pointing others to Christ.

Worship is the act of turning mind, body and soul in reverence and obedience to a power beyond ourselves. Worship often involves symbolic actions, words and images that appear on a physical level but shape our spiritual landscape. Every culture conditions its people to participate in symbolic expressions of allegiance without critical reflection.

Even John of Patmos, author of Revelation, was prone to worship something or someone other than God and had to be corrected (Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9). But John's eyes were opened to see that the whole world was worshiping a beast of an emperor/empire (13:1-10). He saw a second beast—the augustales and their system—that made people of the world worship the first beast of empire (13:11-18).

Mennonites face allegiance temptations even from our own faith heritage.

John's vision called the Roman Empire to account for violence, greed and idolatry—and provides the language and symbols of alternative allegiance. Instead of singing songs to the beast of empire, followers of Jesus sing, "Worthy is the Lamb." Instead of accepting citizenship in imperial Babylon (Rome and its network), Christians receive citizenship in the New Jerusalem.

Revelation suggests that our allegiance will turn toward the Creator if we do the following:

1. Worship God and the Lamb with our whole selves. From start to finish, John's vision reverberates with worship, and we will not be faithful to Jesus without experiencing the same. Regular worship with the faith community and daily communion with God recalibrate our spiritual navigation. We need worship that is experiential, not just cerebral. We need to bend the knee, get soaked at baptism and enter prayer or song with culturally appropriate body language.

2. Commit to the New Jerusalem as our primary

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This portion of a 9 B.C. sculpture honoring Caesar Augustus portrays religious leaders, probably priests of the cult of emperor worship. (Photo by J. Nelson Kraybill)

Continued from page 9

place of allegiance. Mennonite involvement in business, education, diplomacy, medicine and other vocations presents an unprecedented and welcome opportunity for witness. But these engagements in society also bring temptation to individualism and unholy allegiance. We need renewed commitment to make church—especially the local congregation—a priority that trumps frequent getaway weekends, sports activities and work overload. We also need to view belonging to the global church of Christ as more important than any national or class identity.

Regular worship with the faith community and daily communion with God recalibrate our spiritual navigation.

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3. Immerse ourselves in the written Word. Four hundred times the author of Revelation alludes to Scripture. The biblical narrative from creation to the return of Christ was the Big Story that shaped John's worldview. Western culture today is less biblically literate than a generation ago, and Mennonites are part of this trend. Unless we again drink deeply from the wells of the written Word, we will not have the spiritual backbone to keep us from bowing to Babylon.

4. Engage in mission that draws others to the New Jerusalem. John sees the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven to earth (Revelation 21:2). Its doors never close, and Jesus the Lamb is at the center. The city—a symbol of the people of God—is big enough to encompass the entire land mass and all the people of the Roman Empire (that is, the entire world as John knew it). From the New Jerusalem flows the water of life that nurtures trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:2). Every member of the body of Christ can claim citizenship in this eternal city. As we drink from the river of life, God calls us to work for the healing of the nations.

So if we are in business or agriculture, we will make certain our products and services benefit humankind. If we are in medicine or law or education, we will live out values of peacemaking, justice and care for the poor. If we are retired, we will use our skills and resources to build the church and bring Good News to others.

And as we witness and work in the world, the most formative activity of our lives will always be worship. Inviting others through the open doors to the Lamb will remain our highest calling and deepest joy.

J. Nelson Kraybill is president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. He is author of Worship Shapes Allegiance *(Brazos Press, forthcoming).*

Christian Pledge of Allegiance

As the current Gulf War began, there were reports of children and youth in public schools being pressured to participate in saying the Pledge of Allegiance and other expressions of patriotism. June Alliman Yoder and Nelson Kraybill, faculty members at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, felt it was important for Christians of all ages to have an alternative statement that expressed allegiance to Jesus Christ. The pledge they drafted (see right) has found its way into multiple publications and is used by believers in many denominations. The authors hope that followers of Jesus say the Christian Pledge of Allegiance in settings where others are giving allegiance to country.

I pledge allegiance
to Jesus Christ,
and to God's kingdom
for which he died—
one Spirit-led people
the world over,
indivisible,
with love and justice
for all.

Disciple-making: A baptism at Living Water Community Church

Bread and bridges for body and soul

Living Water Community Church in Chicago tries to be a reconciling presence in its neighborhood.

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Soon after Living Water Community Church relocated to a Chicago street corner where a gang shooting occurred in 2001, the church discovered that the way to young people's lives is sometimes through their stomachs.

Living Water, begun in 1995, was renting space for its Sunday services a couple blocks from this site when the shooting happened. In response, the congregation felt called to pray on the corner. Soon the prayers turned toward the discernment that God was leading them to become a permanent and reconciling presence at this violent intersection.

By 2005, the congregation had renovated a large store front in a mini mall on the corner and called it home. It didn't take long before the hungry young people who hung out on the corner discovered the congregation's Wednesday potlucks. They drifted in to fill their plates and sit down for supper.

"It's a strategic location for relating with young people, because we are one block from the local grade school and two blocks away from the local high school," says Sally Schreiner Youngquist, senior pastor of the inner-city Mennonite congregation. "Young people are passing by in great numbers all the time.

"Some of them got wind of our potluck and came in. We're trying really hard to relate to them, learning their names and chatting with them while we eat. Being a bridge in our neighborhood between groups of people is why we came here. And it's happening in surprising ways—such as the potluck—that we didn't foresee."

A bridge is built one brick at a time. So the congregation is slowly finding positive ways to provide bread for their souls as well as their stomachs. For example, last August, the congregation helped

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A congregational dance at Living Water Community Church

Peter Anderson

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support a talent show, organized for young people by a church member working for a local nonprofit neighborhood organization.

"It went really well," Youngquist says. "One young person read a poem, another sang to some taped music, other gals and guys did a dance, and some of them shared artwork and baked goods.

"The event provided positive attention for young people who get negative attention when people call the cops because they are hanging out on the corner. We think this is a good beginning to exploring their spiritual hunger and eventually getting to know their parents and families."

Disciple-making is at the heart of what we're all about.—Tim Peebles

Feeding many hungers of diverse community: Living Water is also discovering that hungry young people are not the only ones drawn to the congregation. The congregation is drawing other young adults who want to integrate their belief in Jesus with following him in all aspects of their life—immigrants hungry for a welcoming place in a foreign land and believers hungry to have a deeper community focus to their faith.

Within this diversity, about 10 percent of the more than 100 Living Water members (175 Sunday-morning attenders) are ethnic Mennonites. Others are younger people from Evangelical and Catholic backgrounds. Recent refugees from Burma, Burundi, the Congo and from refugee camps in Nepal have also been drawn to the congregation, bringing with them their own languages.

"Many refugees have poured into Chicago because it has good social services and jobs, and our neighborhood is multicultural and has good rental housing," Youngquist says. "We try to be sensitive to all their many stories, each with their own narrative of suffering."

Making disciples at heart of congregation: Because of the theological, ethnic and economic diversity, faith/discipleship formation doesn't look like what it may in more traditional settings, says Tim Peebles, discipleship elder.

The congregation's vision is to be a disciple-making, parish-church, Mennonite congregation that engages in discipleship through worship, community and mission, he says. The congregation's cloverleaf symbol pictures worship, community and mission as three intersecting leaves, and discipleship forming the intersection, Peebles says.

"Disciple-making is at the heart of what we're all about," Peebles says. "We have nothing like a 10-week discipleship class. Discipleship-forming for us is more informal and includes a whole-life approach to building reconciling relationships.

"Being transformed into the image of Jesus happens a lot by osmosis. People who are attracted to us will pick up the habits of those who have been part of our congregation awhile—including Bible reading, prayer, lots of table fellowship, sharing and transparency and giving and receiving counsel."

Many members of Living Water live within a block or two of the congregation in order to build

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Many members of Living Water live within a block or two of the congregation in order to build closer and more daily relationships.

closer and more daily relationships, he says. Members also find creative ways of encouraging close-knit community, such as the Peebles, who provide soup and bread for lunch every Sunday after worship for anyone who wants some.

Finding particular path to peace: Discipleship forming for Living Water also involves a lot of risk-taking, Peebles says. Some members are considering developing a youth program that might incorporate martial arts.

"We've heard about a Mennonite church in Goshen, Ind., that offers a modified marshal arts program to help youth faced with violence learn principles of character-building, discipline and peaceful response," Peebles says. "We encounter so much gang violence here and so much street fighting outside our building. We need to engage our kids with peace in ways they can understand.

"Some people in the congregation have reservations about how this might fit within a Mennonite framework. But no one in the congregation has yet said they believe that a modified martial arts component of a youth program could not, in principle, be part of faithful Mennonite practice."

By trying new things, Living Water does not want to abandon or replace inherited Mennonite practices. The congregation is seeking to retain its Anabaptist roots while growing new shoots in the inner-city soil.

"We are simply searching for ways to supplement, enhance, contextualize those practices for our local community," he says. "The end result—like at the Peace Academy in Goshen—will include inherited Mennonite practices and skills, together with new developments."

Laurie Oswald Robinson is a freelance writer from Newton, Kan.

Peter Anderson

A girl hugs a member of Living Water after she finished singing at a neighborhood block party.

Among all the peopl

A story about a Mennonite church and an American flag

by June Galle Krehbiel

This is a story about a Mennonite church and an American flag. It's a story with no elves or fairies but a tale of people helping those who wander the earth.

Since its founding in 1955, Zion Mennonite Church, a 250-plus, small-town congregation in Archbold, Ohio, has steeped itself in peace and justice work. The church resettled Polish and German people from World War II, brought Vietnamese, Laotian and Thai families to the area in the 1970s and took in Central American refugees heading to Canada in the 1980s. For many years the church has also related to area migrant camps of seasonal farm workers.

In 2005, Cathi Baer, a congregational member, was asked to be the church's sole link with the broader church and its peace and justice efforts. Baer balked. No way could she do that by herself, she said. "The peace issue of the Mennonite Church is much broader than what one person can do alone," she said.

The immigration issue came to us.—Cathi Baer

But doing something seemed necessary, and she did feel an urge to gather for prayer with others who also "felt anguish" about the war in Iraq. Strongly encouraged by Ron Guengerich, one of Zion's pastors at the time, Baer invited everyone in the church who was interested in peace and justice issues to an "envisioning" meeting.

The first action was to attend a conference of peace churches in Indianapolis, and 14 people went, including others from the area who had heard about the event from Zion members.

No longer waiting for permission from some imaginary godmother, the Peace and Justice Project lifted off the ground. It's still soaring. Since October 2005, the group has met nearly every Tuesday noon. In one hour the group prays together and decides what issues they'll work on.

"The Zion congregation has a passionate desire to practice Anabaptist theology," youth pastor Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg says. "Doing peace and justice work is who we are, and it is integrally connected to our faith and walk with Christ."

Currently the group includes nine adults and three youth from Zion plus two other Mennonite youth and friends from the community. Catholic sisters working with immigrants attend when they can. A broader group is kept informed by e-mail.

"We're almost too busy to meet because we're so busy doing the work," Baer says.

The volunteers advocate for all areas of peace and justice. They've planned prayer vigils and evening vespers. They've organized film nights and prayed for Christian Peacemaker Teams in Iraq. They've given children's stories on nonviolent toys, added their names to the state's death penalty moratorium and encouraged the church to write to government officials on various peace and justice issues.

But when a Catholic sister showed up at the door three years ago, almost unannounced, seeking office space for an area Latino Family Outreach program, the Zion folks realized their prayers and plans were taking a shape no one had expected.

"The immigration issue came to us," Baer says.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Great Lakes had advised Catholic Sister Karen Bernhardt to explore the idea of finding a Mennonite church in northwest Ohio that would be willing to house her work with immigrants. What she found was Zion's Peace and Justice Project group.

And office space.

"We have this new addition. Why not use it for something like this?" Schrock-Ringenberg remembers saying. Zion's newly remodeled building sat practically vacant five days a week. Here was an opportunity to share it.

In fall 2006, the Zion church council and elders approved use of church space for Project Hope (Proyecto Esperanza). One-

Pray
for Peace
Act
for Peace

there was great joy

Project Hope and the Peace and Justice Project at Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold, Ohio, hosted a fiesta, complete with piñatas, to raise money for fuel costs to transport ESL students. ESL students, new citizens and other immigrants added to the meal of enchiladas by bringing their ethnic dishes to share with the congregation. Over 200 people from the church and community enjoyed the celebration.

fourth of the new construction intended for youth was designated for immigrant work.

Five days a week Sister Ellen Lamberjack from the Sisters of St. Francis order, Tiffin, Ohio, helps immigrants with legal needs from her office at Zion Mennonite Church. She counsels immigrants, helps them fill out forms, offers citizenship classes and tax clinics. Two mornings a week Lu Ann Kanagy teaches English as a Second Language classes while church members provide child care. Zion and other Archbold folks transport ESL students to and from the church, often driving an hour one way.

And the people gather together what they have to help in other ways, too. Some help teach citizenship classes. CPAs help with taxes. Willing shoppers buy food and clothing when it is needed.

"Immigration is probably the most exciting, the most hands-on of all the projects our group has worked with. We're not just holding candles or writing letters. We're relating to people," Baer says.

When the first immigrants counseled by Sister Ellen became American citizens, Project Hope, with help from the church, planned a Welcoming the New Citizens celebration for Nov. 12, 2007.

Someone thought that it would be nice to have an American flag at the event so the new citizens could stand in front of it to tell their stories. The church had never owned a flag. The symbol of American citizenship would have to come from somewhere else.

Cork Nofziger, the church custodian, asked his friends at the local VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) if Zion could borrow their flag. The vets thought it kind of cool—and a bit humorous—that the Mennonites, who usually backed away from patriotic activities, wanted their flag.

So that's how the American flag came to Zion Mennonite Church for a day—and not just the flag. New American citizens, many of them Catholics, brought their families to join the celebration and food from their native cultures to add to the reception.

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But the story doesn't end there. Relationships continue in this northwest Ohio church.

"Sister Ellen and Sister Karen have blessed our community with their presence. Our youth are proud to share the building with Sister Ellen, and in turn she is always willing to help lead devotions or lessons with the youth," Schrock-Ringenberg says.

Last summer, Helen Weldy, a Peace and Justice Project member, taught the adult Sunday school classes, using the Adult Bible Study Guide on the theme "Images of Christ."

"She focused on making the congregation aware of connections between us and the immigrants who come to our church for ESL classes and legal counseling," Baer says.

Weldy invited Lamberjack to speak one Sunday. Some of the discussion centered on a topic that would need more discernment. What would it mean for Zion to be a designated sanctuary for immigrants—a safe place? Could Zion do it?

The prayer-filled peace and justice work at Zion continues as immigrants and others are served. Last summer Project Hope and the Peace and Justice Project at Zion hosted a fiesta, complete with piñatas, to raise money for fuel costs to transport ESL students. Two hundred people from the church and community showed up.

Last fall MCC awarded Karen Bernhardt a $5,000 grant to continue the Latino Family Services work.

Last November, the church had another party for more new citizens. And the people came. And the flag came. And among all the people there was great joy.

June Galle Krehbiel is a freelance writer from Moundridge, Kan.

Vibrant churche

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Tim Moyer, Franconia Mennonite Conference

Worship at Philadelphia Praise Center

Even though our citizenship is in heaven, we can't ignore hurting people and those who face injustice in their lives.—Beny Krisbianto

Immigrant Churches ca

by Ken Beidler

Philadelphia Praise Center (PPC) and Nations Worship Center, two Franconia Mennonite Conference congregations, call the same South Philadelphia neighborhood home. Transplanted immigrants from Indonesia comprise the majority of members of both groups. The religiously motivated riots in 2000 in Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city, brought many Indonesian Christians to Philadelphia seeking asylum and new homes.

Leaders of these congregations deal with both the spiritual and practical implications of being new immigrant congregations.

"We always deal with immigration issues," Beny Krisbianto, leader at Nations Worship Center, says. "After 9/11 it has become hard to apply for citizenship." Finding work, accessing health care, negotiating the complex immigration process and learning English are challenges community members face daily. "Justice belongs to everybody, including immigrants here on American soil. I believe Jesus is also a refugee. Even though our citizenship is in heaven, we can't ignore hurting people and those who face injustice in their lives," he says.

Aldo Siahaan, the PPC pastor, was not a member of the Mennonite church before he came to the United States. Through the help of Bastian Yosin, an Indonesian Mennonite pastor from Central Java, and from reading Mennonite theological materials, Siahaan grew to appreciate the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition.

"The core message of the gospel is not only in the pulpit but in our daily lives," Siahaan says. "I can see where the love of Jesus is not only in talk but in the act. That really impressed me. And also the message of peace; I think this world needs the message of peace."

Steve Kriss, Franconia Conference director of communication and leadership cultivation, lists a number of attractive characteristics of these immigrant congregations.

"The vibrancy in their congregational life and sense of possibility broadens what it means to be Mennonite," Kriss says. "These congregations are entrepreneurial. They don't disconnect the work of evangelism from peace and justice."

On a Sunday morning at the Philadelphia Praise Center, morning worship begins with music sung in three languages: Indonesian, English and Spanish.

s in South Philly

ennonite Church USA beyond its comfort zone.

"We are growing as a multicultural church," Vina Krisnadi, PPC member and Franconia Conference board member, says. "The leaders of these congregations acknowledge that this sensitivity to other languages and cultural expressions can be a struggle.

It is not easy to worship in several languages at once. It would be easier to preach without translation.

"But that is not what God said to us," Siahaan says. "We try to be respectful of one another. We try to learn Spanish songs and learn English songs and be supportive of one another."

Siahaan preaches from the narrative of the early church in Acts, challenging the congregation to daily discipleship and evangelism. He urges his listeners to understand that the church ought to be in the streets meeting people where they live and work. The congregation responds by praying for Haitians affected by recent hurricanes and views a YouTube segment on the growth of underground house churches around the world. After the service, a group from the church walks over to the Indonesian Muslim community center to participate in a meal and celebration to mark the end of Ramadan.

The connection to the Muslim community began when Siahaan became aware of the need in the Muslim community for space to gather and pray during Ramadan. The congregation reached consensus in 2007 to open their building and provide food during this Muslim time of fasting and prayer. Siahaan called Indah Nuritasari, a leader in the Muslim community and offered their church space for the prayer and meal at the end of each day of fasting.

Siahaan explains what this meant for his congregation to offer hospitality. "Because of the persecution that they had experienced in Indonesia, this is an opportunity to show love of God, to show the mercy."

Ahmed Munjid, a doctoral student at Temple University, Philadelphia, and a leader in the Muslim community, affirms the friendship between the two communities.

"I and many al-Falah Mosque members learned that friendship is something necessary in our social life and that friendship enables us to do more both for our 'self' and for others," Munjid says.

Some churches in the South Philly neighborhood opposed PPC's decision to offer hospitality. The church received calls from pastors. "You are not supposed to open the church to the Muslim. The presence of the Lord will leave from your congregation," Siahaan recalls other pastors saying.

While criticized by South Philadelphia churches, the relationship with the Muslim community helped PPC members find their Mennonite identity.

While criticized by South Philadelphia churches, the relationship with the Muslim community helped PPC members find their Mennonite identity. "Anabaptist perspectives make sense to Indonesian Christians because they were marginalized in their home country and continue to live on the margins here in the [United States]," Steve Kriss says.

Mennonite Church USA
www.MennoniteUSA.org/identity

Through networking with Indonesian Mennonites in California and in Java and through the help of Indonesian Mennonite leaders, PPC joined Franconia Conference in 2006. Nations Worship Center joined Franconia Conference in 2007.

"I am glad to be a Mennonite," Krisbianto says. He admits that before he moved to the Philadelphia area from Iowa City, Iowa, he thought that Mennonites were like the Amish in Kalona, Iowa.

Relationships between the immigrant communities and Franconia Conference's more established, ethnically European-Mennonite congregations have fostered rich avenues for learning. The new relationships have also prompted calls from these immigrant communities for more political advocacy on the issues of immigration.

These congregations have much to offer Mennonite Church USA in their ability to build connections in local communities, their passion for

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Tim Moyer, Franconia Mennonite Conference

Philadelphia Praise Center opens its building for local Muslims to use for prayer during Ramadan.

Continued from page 17

multicultural expressions in worship and their concern for peace and justice in the world through reconciliation with the local Muslim community.

Asked what his congregation has to offer the wider Mennonite church, Siahaan hesitates before responding.

This country is luring people with so many things. And I know Mennonites have done so many good things, but with all our resources we can do more.
—Aldo Siahaan

"Humility. I believe we need to go out from our comfort zone. This country is luring people with so many things. And I know Mennonites have done so many good things, but with all our resources we can do more. I've seen how the immigrant church is more passionate to reach out. They (people outside the church) want to see us; they want to see Jesus through us. Let's make Jesus visible through our life," Siahaan says.

Like the early believers in Acts, these congregations are listening to how the Spirit is calling them to reach out both at home and beyond. With a growing population of immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries, PPC supports a couple from Mexico doing ministry in South Philadelphia.

Both congregations are planting new churches in Indonesian communities outside Philadelphia. Krisbianto and the leadership at Nations Worship Center are supporting a new church in the Washington area, and Siahaan and PPC are beginning to establish a house church in the Pittsburgh area.

Ken Beidler lives in Philadelphia, writing, working on pottery and parenting. He attends Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia.

Worship resources

To make it easy for your congregation to focus on the national identity resolution passed by Mennonite Church USA delegates at San José 2007, additional worship and study resources are available on the Web (www.MennoniteUSA.org/identity):

- worship resources for a complete service including scripture drama, prayers and litanies, children's time and a visual focus;
- a three-part congregational study on national identity issues;
- additional stories including dramas and an Anabaptist rap.

Mennonite Church USA
www.MennoniteUSA.org/identity

The focus statement for the worship and study material is: "In Jesus we see an astonishing revelation of God's love for the whole world, a love that overflows all boundaries and brings healing, peace and great joy. When we follow Jesus, our true identity as children of God is renewed and, in consequence, all other loyalties and commitments take their place in relationship to our core allegiance to Christ." Scriptures are Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Psalm 146 and Luke 19:1-10.

Call to worship

Leader: We gather to worship as children of God,
known and loved by our Creator.

People: We gather to worship as followers of Jesus Christ,
longing to be true and faithful disciples.

Leader: We gather to worship as those in whom the Spirit dwells,
called to plant seeds of justice and hope in our world.

All: Knowing who we are and who invites us here,
let us worship God with joy!

Prayer: God of the whole world, whose arms embrace us in love and whose voice calls us to follow, we give thanks for your faithful presence. You call us to come near to you, to worship you with undivided hearts, and to love you with body, mind and soul. Transform us by your grace today so that all we do or say will proclaim: You are the God in whom we trust. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

A Prayer for congregations of Mennonite Church USA

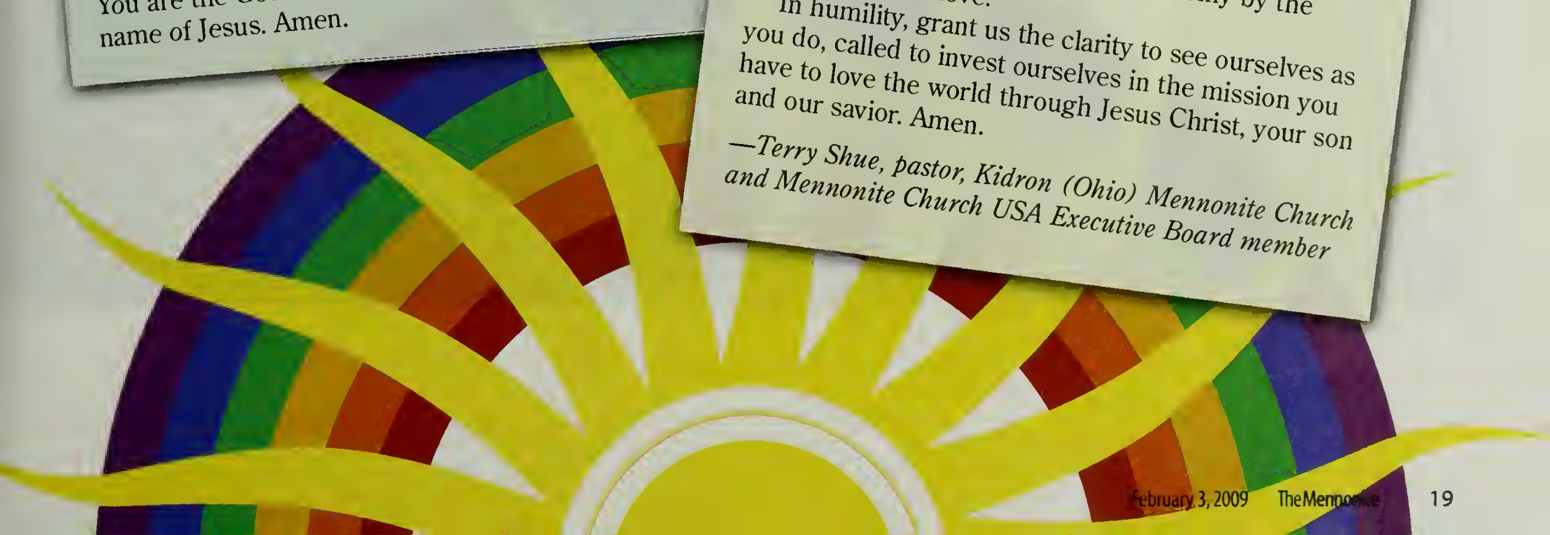
Almighty God, in whom we live and breathe and have our very being, we join believers around the world to worship you and pledge our desire to follow your son Jesus with our lives. And yet, Lord, we confess our way is cloudy. The voices around us are enticing and at times intoxicating, causing us to forget whose we are and to whom we belong.

In this country there is so much for which we are thankful, freedoms, opportunities and resources which abound. But Lord, we also know, just as the children of Israel discovered, prosperity of a people sometimes displaces You as the object of our worship and allegiance.

Lord, reawake within us the vision to be your people. In our journey of life, may we continue to listen to our brothers and sisters around the world. May their words encourage and challenge us to be the people you have called us to be. May we be attentive to your kingdom which is larger than our homeland and broader than our borders, contained only by the breadth of your love.

In humility, grant us the clarity to see ourselves as you do, called to invest ourselves in the mission you have to love the world through Jesus Christ, your son and our savior. Amen.

—Terry Shue, pastor, Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church USA Executive Board member



"If we enter each day
with a vision
of following Jesus

and bringing glory to God,
our loyalties are
more likely to reflect
the way of Jesus
and the hope of
God's reign. ”

—J. Nelson Kraybill

Following
Jesus in a
world
that is not

Mennonite
Church
USA

Drama excerpts

Professional screenwriters Don Yost and Joel Kauffmann have written a series of dramatic sketches for congregations to use on the national identity theme. Here are some excerpts. You'll find these entire sketches and others at www.MennoniteUSA.org/identity.

Camp survival

A perplexed Mennonite Camper tries to understand why he has been assigned to share a cabin with two of his historical nemeses: Herod the Great and Ulrich Zwingli, the reformer.

Zwingli: We didn't like putting all those people to death, but the survival of our nation, our very way of life was at stake, so we did what had to be done.

Camper: Maybe you have a point, but I still don't see what I could possibly have in common with the two of you.

Herod: You never put anyone to death?

Camper: Not even close. I'm a pacifist. I oppose the death penalty. I invest only in socially responsible stocks that exclude firms that manufacture weapons.

Zwingli: Well, perhaps you live in a safer, more peaceful time.

Camper: Hardly. Our country and our way of life face daily threat of terrorist attacks or nuclear annihilation from hostile countries.

Herod: So how do your political leaders respond when you say treasonous things to them like this Michael Sattler fellow?

Zwingli: Yeah, what happens when you tell your leaders that you'd rather fight on the side of the terrorists than on the side of a so-called Christian nation?

Camper: We, uh, don't generally say things like that, not in this kind of fearful environment.

Zwingli: So what do you do?

Camper: Well, we blog, write letters to the newspaper, hold candlelight vigils and, like I mentioned, invest in socially-conscious stocks.

Herod: Oh, I bet that has them shaking in their sandals.

Self-inflicted tongue screw

A woman from the pages of *Martyrs Mirror* who has been transported to today tries to figure out why, when we have finally won the freedom to witness, we don't.

Marie: But I don't understand. If our church still exists, and if we still believe in the same things, why don't we bear witness to those beliefs?

iPod guy: We do, but now we try to, like, show it through our actions. You know the saying: "If you want to know if I'm a Christian, don't ask me, ask my neighbor."

Marie: Actually, I don't. What does it mean?

iPod guy: I'm not sure. But it makes us feel better about our "silent in the land" status.

Marie: So instead of following Jesus' command to go out and preach to the lost, now the lost are supposed to come looking for us, but not actually ask us, ask our neighbors instead?

iPod guy: Uh, something like that—although it doesn't sound as good when you say it.

Whose land is it?

Sam, a Mennonite of European descent, talks about the unique Mennonite perspective toward land with Winona, a Mennonite of Native American descent. What Sam doesn't know is that the land his family farms once belonged to Winona's tribe.

Winona: So the early Anabaptists did not see land as essential to their very identity, would move on rather than compromise their conscience?

Sam: Absolutely.

Winona: So this fertile land that your family took in 1842—

Sam: I didn't say "took," I said "settled"—and it took decades of hard work and ingenuity—cutting trees, laying drainage tile—to make it productive.

Winona: Right, so after nearly two centuries of ownership and great prosperity, suppose another crisis of conscience arose related to your land—would your family be willing to give it up like your Anabaptist ancestors, to continue putting principle above possession?

Sam: Of course—well, I think we would—although, we've kind of come to see land in this New World as part of God's blessing for our historical faithfulness. And anyhow, it's a different time and place than it was back then. I mean, if you had to pull up roots today, where would you go?

Winona: Yes. Where?

Linda Shelly

Following Jesus: A baptism in Colombia

A Christ-centered church

Struggle for faithfulness bonds national churches.

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Thousands of miles separate the Colombian Mennonite Church (IMCOL) and Mennonite Church USA. But a common struggle for greater faithfulness bonds these churches in ways that bring them as close as the heartbeat of Christ.

While Anabaptists in these countries know that Christ's good news includes salvation for souls and shalom for communities, they sometimes question their witness and identity. Some people wonder how to integrate the social and spiritual aspects of Christ's call in cultures embattled with economic and political turmoil. Some people ask, Do we need to integrate these in order to be faithful? Some people give up, having been criticized for focusing too much on peace or on evangelism.

But Christ's disciples don't have to make these false distinctions, say church leaders across the globe, including Linda Shelly, Mennonite Mission Network's Latin America director, and Peter Stucky, pastor, long-term IMCOL leader and Mennonite World Conference Executive Committee member for Latin America. They work together to help Anabaptists reclaim their full-bodied identity as citizens of Christ's kingdom even when they live in troubled countries.

"Living the gospel and living Anabaptism are not two different things. Rather, Anabaptism provides a specific way of understanding what it means to follow Jesus," says Stucky, pastor of Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogotá.

"We create false separations between being Anabaptist or Mennonite and evangelizing and spreading the gospel, or between working for justice and peace or praying and seeking the gifts of the Spirit that can disunite us and tear apart the body of the Lord."

Shelly says, "Peter talks about how the early Anabaptist movement was so clearly a movement of the Spirit, including both their radical actions for justice and their rapidly spreading faith.

"Today the term 'Anabaptist theology' is too often understood narrowly to refer to the justice and peace distinctive of our faith. And when we talk of the work of the Holy Spirit, evangelism and church-planting come to mind. … But true Anabaptist theology is all of this together."

Walking with Christ through civil war: It is easier to talk about this integration than to live it out in daily life. Stucky has worked at this integration in a land besieged by a longtime civil war.

When Stucky became pastor of Teusaquillo Mennonite in 1995, he wanted to avoid the polarities:

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Centering on Christ will do more than anything to dissolve the polarities and dichotomies that so tempt Anabaptists.—Peter Stucky

Mennonite Church USA
www.MennoniteUSA.org/identi

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the spiritual and social action, between those who pray and those who work for justice, between those who fast and those who provide food for the hungry.

He had no plan to carry out this vision, but the country's troubles took care of that. When Colombia's civil war intensified in the 1990s, many needy people appeared at the church. Over the years following its inception in 1973, the church had become traditional and staid, but this situation shook up the status quo.

Suddenly dozens of needy people were on the church's doorstep. They included displaced people, the handicapped, prisoners, street people, undernourished, hungry children and those whose lives were threatened by the violence.

"Many people responded with enthusiasm and joy to the free invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ," Stucky says. "He has washed them with his precious blood, forgiven them, cleansed them, raised them up, dried their tears, restored them and changed their lives."

Many of these people had never belonged to a church but now discovered a way to be Christian that integrated a concern for justice, human rights and a new world, he says. Many of these people often hated the guerrilla, the paramilitaries and the armed forces.

In the new community of Jesus, they learned to forgive and live into Ephesians 2:14: "Christ is our peace. He made the Jews and the Gentiles one single people, destroyed the wall of separation and annulled in his own body the enmity that existed."

Even with this great harvest of transformation, the older members of the congregation found it difficult to accept new members, he says. They felt displaced in their own church with a lack of pastoral attention. They felt insecurity for themselves and for their children. Some left the church.

"This was a jolt for the congregation, a collision of cultures, an impact of people who were different, needy, traumatized and disoriented," he says. "This demanded intense attention, a great amount of time, love and human and economic resources."

Most members of the congregation grasped the challenge, knowing God was at work. Two responses included the formation of a Justice and Peace Committee and a Committee for Displaced People, both of which meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the distressed.

"In this crisis, we have learned that the local church is the primary agent of mission (see box)," he says. "We have specialized institutions and we thank God for them. We need them. However, it is tempting to transfer the needs that continue to confront the church to specialized institutions.

"The first focus of mission is the local church. It is there that the people arrive. The contact and the work with them transforms the local community."

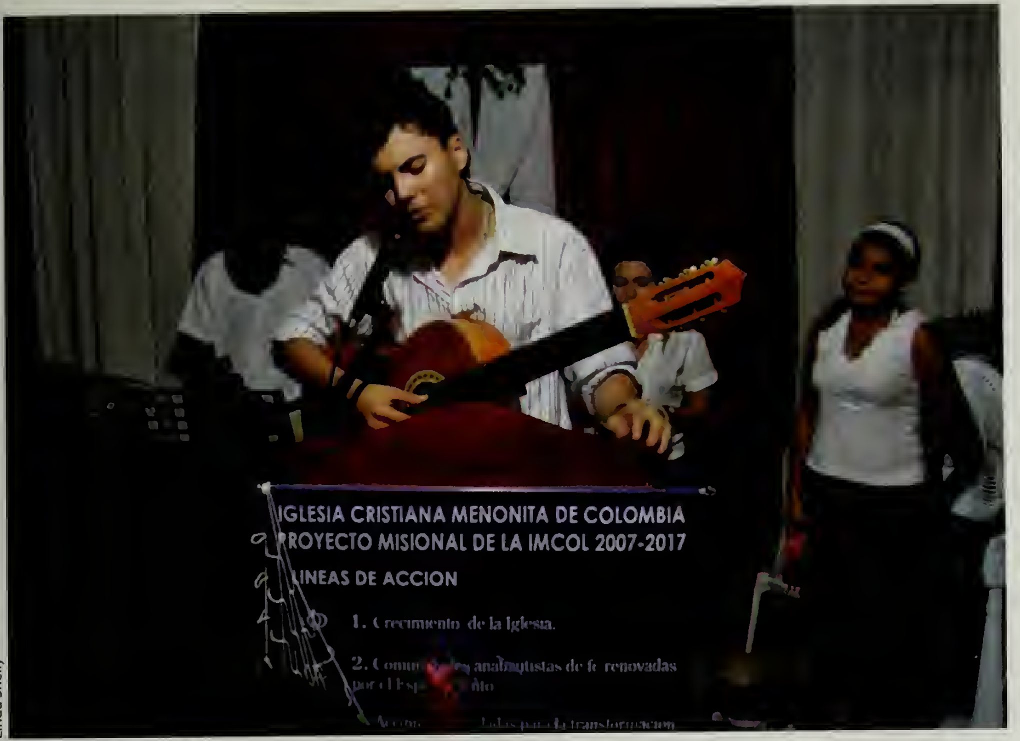
Journey with Jesus spreads to Colombia's north coast: A holistic witness of Jesus has also spread to the Caribbean Coast of Colombia. Justice and

Colombia's counsel to Mennonite Church USA

Peter Stucky shares lessons the Colombian Mennonite Church has gleaned following Jesus.

- Be aware of God's guidance. God has tasks and ministries for our churches if we listen to him. Our plans are less important than God's.
- Accept rejected people. Each time in the Bible rejected people are accepted, it is for the enrichment, blessing and progress of the saving purposes of God.
- Understand that attitudinal and geographical location is significant. God asks the church to be in the world. It is important that the needy have easy access to our churches and meeting places.
- Keep older members. Older members are valuable and serve as mentors and models to newcomers.
- Allow the faith community to be a healing community. The faith community is the healing expression of Jesus Christ's hands, smile and embrace.
- Know that the church is truly one body united organically. All parts are important: conversion, discipleship, baptism, growth, mutual aid, counseling and peace and justice testimony, prayer, human rights, miracles, celebrative worship, Christian education for all ages. All these depend on the head, Jesus Christ, and his loving presence in the midst of his people through the action of the Holy Spirit.

—Laurie Oswald Robinson


IGLESIA CRISTIANA MENONITA DE COLOMBIA
PROYECTO MISIONAL DE LA IMCOL 2007-2017
LINEAS DE ACCION
1. Crecimiento de la Iglesia.

Linda Shelly

Christ centered: A worship service in Colombia

peace work and a humanitarian response to an epidemic led Mennonites to the area in the 1990s. Church members were serving in a way so linked with their faith that people who got to know them wanted their faith and their church.

Because these emerging churches were so distant from other congregations, the Colombian Mennonite Church asked Mennonite Mission Network workers Gamaliel and Amanda Falla to go to the North Coast in 2002 to start a central church in Barranquilla and help consolidate a new North Coast region for the church. The work has grown to include five new churches.

One annual event that symbolizes the sharing of a holistic gospel is Pan y Paz, or Bread and Peace. Church members distribute bread while sharing the gospel through street/park activities that focus on Jesus' way of peace. The public nonviolent witness commemorates the United Nations International Day of Peace.

Though economic hardship is a stark reality for people ministered to through congregations, the congregations also struggle with this reality, Gamaliel Falla says.

"This is one of the poorest areas of the country," he says. "Our leaders struggle to have the basics to sustain themselves, even as they reach out to others."

Latin America, North America no strangers in identity struggle: Shelly, Newton, Kan., works with many churches across Latin America. Some of their challenges are similar to those in North American churches, and, she says, "we can learn from each other."

"Many Latin American church conferences are similar to our own," she says. "They have some articulate leaders who hold together the passions for peace and social justice and evangelism and church planting. Yet many members and congregations who give priority to one passion or the other are critical of those who give their priority in another area."

But she believes Anabaptism—which emphasizes being Jesus followers rather than only Jesus believers—connects the individual and communal aspects of faith.

"Sometimes, when people first come to Christ, they commit to a congregation not only because it fits them theologically but also because it integrates their personal faith with reaching out to the community in ways they couldn't do alone," she says. "They see people not only talking about their faith but living it out for the good of others."

Following Jesus in a world that is not

Centering on Christ will do more than anything to dissolve the polarities and dichotomies that so tempt Anabaptists, Stucky says.

"An Anabaptist Mennonite church is a Christ-centered church," Stucky says. "The totality of our being, work and purpose has it origin in Jesus Christ. It exists because of him and for him that he may be known, exalted and loved."

Laurie Oswald Robinson is a freelance writer from Newton, Kan.

Following Jesus in a world that is not

Terry Shue is pastor of Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church and a member of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board.

Who am I? Who are we as a people? We all ask this question in relationship to family, friends and community. To answer, we look for help outside ourselves. Yet the search on our journey from adolescence to adulthood remains largely an internal search for self-identity.

Who am I? Who are we?

Who am I when I look beyond the ways I have been defined by those around me? Who am I when I own the values and faith of generations that came before me? Who am I when I decide what I stand for? These questions sustain our families and faith communities and carry our values to future generations.

The 2007 Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly passed a resolution asking the Executive Board to help congregations explore our identity in the context of modern life in the United States.

What will serve us better now and in the future is a clear center. And that center is Jesus.

What does it mean to follow Jesus in a world that is not?

We live in a nation where we have much to be thankful for and much we take for granted. At times this empire of great promise causes us as a people to experience great peril of faith. Our concern is not the imminent threat of persecution but the constant seductive forces that replace God with nation as our object of worship and source of identity. We find it difficult to resist the unyielding lure of materialism and nationalism as well as the desire for security to retain what we think is ours.

Our beliefs and values are changing. Some of these changes are exciting while others are disheartening. Many of us are moving away from being on the margins of society. Many are more educated and at the center of circles of power. We live and engage our culture differently from how our grandparents did. These changes have impacted who we are and how we think of ourselves as Mennonites.

As a church, we are highly invested in global missions. We've formed relationships with brothers and sisters around the world, positively affecting our congregations and families. The voices of our global family often bring us prophetic words of counsel and caution about lifestyle, globalization and national politics.

We ask, Who are we as Mennonite Christians living in the United States of America in the 21st century?

After delegates passed the national identity resolution, the Executive Board formed a task group to shape our response. Our challenge and opportunity was to embrace the diversity within our denomination and strengthen who we are by clarifying our shared identity as God's people.

In days past, members of our congregations were easily identified as in or out. Clear boundaries were maintained at great emotional and relational cost. We guarded these boundaries to keep our church strong. For insiders, the boundaries were unequivocal, and everyone knew what was expected. Our message to the outside world was simple—you cannot belong unless you measure up to our standards.

As the Mennonite community has become more diverse in race, culture and social understanding, our identity formation requires something new. While clear boundaries may have served us well in the past, what will serve us better now and in the future is a clear center. And that center is Jesus.

We recognize our approach must change from defining people as in or out to inviting people to journey with us if they are moving in the same direction.

In this special edition of *The Mennonite*, writers reflect on our national identity as Mennonites in the United States. You'll read stories about individuals and congregations struggling to discover what it means to follow Jesus in a world that is not. You'll also find help for congregational study that can be used in small groups, Sunday school or other settings.

Can we rediscover our shared identity? A wild dream, you say? Maybe, but as I read Jesus' prayer in John 17 and hear his desire and vision for the church to be one, I believe it is a worthwhile conversation. I pray these materials will spur conversations in your congregation, among the congregations in your conference and even on the Delegate Assembly floor in Columbus this summer.

May the Holy Spirit guide us as we clarify together who we are and inspire each other to catch a glimpse of who God desires us to be. TM

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Roadside Jesus**—Isaac Villegas
- **Our Communion questions**—Eleanor Kreider

Executive board delays one-board model

Gives 'resounding yes' to building campaign; picks Phoenix for 2013 convention

Meeting in 70-degree weather Jan. 22-24 at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Ariz., the Executive Board (EB) of Mennonite Church USA agreed to come back in 2013. The board affirmed the recommendation of the Convention Planning staff of Executive Leadership to make Phoenix the site for the 2013 convention and delegate assembly.

Jorge Vallejos, director of Convention Planning, reported that Phoenix has six member congregations. Anticipating one concern, associate director Rachel Swartzendruber Miller pointed out that Phoenix's heat index is lower than Atlanta, Houston, Louisville and St. Louis.

The board also heard a report from Peter Graber of Mennonite Mission Network on the "Joining Together, Investing in Hope" campaign, which includes building a facility in Elkhart, Ind., adjacent to the campus of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

Graber reported that while the campaign has raised about $7.9 million thus far, another $2.25 million needs to be raised before construction begins. Since it appears that won't happen in time to begin construction this June, EB will re-evaluate the campaign this fall.

Moderator-elect Ed Diller said the campaign is "to increase the missional ability of our denomination." In later discussions, EB said that while it retains the power to stop the campaign if necessary, the board gives "a resounding yes" to going ahead, said Diller.

EB heard from the directors of Mennonite Church USA agencies. Each director named finances as a major concern at present. They also reported ways they have worked together across agencies to streamline resources.

About a year ago, EB issued a call for strengthening the church's vision by "changing our relationships, behaviors and organization." The plan to move to having one denominational board was postponed in meetings last June. At this meeting, EB updated their call (see box at right).

EB held a review of Mennonite Education Agency at this meeting. The board commended MEA's efforts to develop a virtual university; its intention to relate to institutional boards in ways that do not result in governance redundancies; its work through the Anabaptist Biblical Institute (see Jan. 20 issue, page 16); its mediating role in creating clarity and mutual support when misperceptions emerge among congregations, conferences and academic institutions; and its careful attention to fiscal planning.

The board also recommended that MEA clarify how its leadership is distinctive, explore virtual education as a way of increasing accessibility to Mennonite education across the church and work with Executive Leadership staff to develop a missional lens for leadership development. Finally, EB said it expects MEA to locate its main office in the proposed denominational office building in Elkhart, Ind.

EB also heard a report from Mennonite Health Services Alliance, which includes 75 ministries. EB voted to affirm a covenant with MHS Alliance for another three years. This covenant affirms the ministries of the alliance and outlines mutual accountabilities.

EB does part of its work in committees. One of these, the church resource committee, reported that it wants constituents to know that EB is aware of economic problems. While EB's fiscal year ends Jan. 31, its 2010 budget looks similar to last year's, with salaries remaining flat and no cost-of-living increase. The tentative budget also calls for about a 10 percent reduction of expenses from its revised budget.

The antiracism committee affirmed work being done on a Spanish language initiative but said there is need for culturally sensitive materials for other racial-ethnic groups. The committee also encouraged using available technology to reach out to people, following the example of the Obama campaign.

In other business, EB

- discussed a report from the search committee for a new executive director;
- heard about meetings with Virginia Mennonite Conference leaders.

EB next meets April 16-18 in Rochester, N.Y.

—Gordon Houser

Executive Board statement

Our commitment to join what God is doing in the world and to see more streamlined denominational structures leads us as an Executive Board to believe that we must continue to assess progress in our churchwide system and keep all alignment options available to us in the future. We look forward to:

- receiving learnings from the newly appointed churchwide consultant on operations and alignment; and
- working with the Governance Council and other parts of the church to further develop churchwide priorities and be good stewards of the resources God has given us.

The Executive Board will continue to routinely review progress toward its stated commitments. By February 2010, the Executive Board will make further decisions in consultation with others as to what changes in our organization may be needed and should be pursued.

Mennonite teacher has personal 'pledge'

Others use Pledge of Allegiance time for prayer, give students explanations.

John Harris

Theoretically, Mennonites pledge their allegiance to God. But what does this mean for Mennonite teachers when the Pledge of Allegiance is recited in their classrooms?

Stephanie Thompson, a member of Faith Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan., takes a "personal moment of silence" when the Pledge is said over the intercom in her classroom in Newton.

Students rarely ask, but when they do, she says, "I am uncomfortable with giving my allegiance to the U.S. flag and country since I believe my allegiance is to God." No one has asked questions beyond this.

John Harris, a member of Pasadena (Calif.) Mennonite Church, promotes critical thinking through an exercise each year in which students analyze the Pledge according to their beliefs.

"Students create options to do during the Pledge," he says. "Some participate fully, some stand in silence, and some remain seated. All are quiet and tolerant of those choosing to participate in this kind of expression."

He has not had any negative response. Harris says he used to remain seated during the Pledge —which angered many people. Now he stands and recites his personal Pledge (see box).

Roger Juhnke, a substitute teacher at schools in Goessel and Hesston, both in Kansas, says he has not felt pressure to recite the Pledge.

"I have simply never brought it up, nor have I ever led it in any of my classes." says Juhnke, who attends Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton. "In the few situations I have been in school when the Pledge was recited, I have simply stood with my hands to my side and remained silent. I know students have noticed, but no one has ever said anything."

Adam Robb, a teacher at Moundridge (Kan.) High School who attends Bethel College Mennonite Church, says many teachers in his district—in a Mennonite community—lead the Lord's Prayer after the Pledge is recited. "Some places that wouldn't fly," he adds.

Some Mennonite parents ask permission for their children not to say the Pledge.

Lynn Schlosser, pastor of Bergthal Mennonite Church in Pawnee Rock, Kan., has written a letter (see www.themennonite.org for the entire letter) to each of her children's teachers concerning the Pledge. The letter requests that—if their children desire—they will stand during the Pledge but not recite it or put their hands over their hearts.

First, her husband is from Canada, and they wanted to raise their children with a "dual awareness."

However, Schlosser's concern runs deeper.

"I didn't see the purpose in having such small children recite such ideological words," she says.

That form of "nationalistic conditioning" makes her uncomfortable, and she questions why we would take that time to pledge to our country, when we do not make that time for God.

Mennonites face Pledge questions outside the classroom, too. Merle Hostetler, pastor at East Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church and a basketball referee, says he has given much thought to how to respond when the Pledge is said at sporting events. At games, many watch what an official does, he adds. Hostetler closes his eyes and makes it a time of prayer—sometimes with his eyes open, sometimes closed.

"My heart is given to one person, that being God," he says. "I look at it as a form of witness.

If he would put his head down or turn away, "that would provide a more negative witness than a positive witness," he says.—*Anna Groff*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

John Harris' personal pledge:

"I commit to the ideas of democratic capitalism. Private property and capital are good; everyone should have some of each. I recognize that God is always calling America, as well as all nations and peoples, to higher standards, and that She has a vision for us greater than our own. The notions of liberty and justice should be at the forefront of our goals as a nation. Hallelujah!"

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Arrest could mean changes for Congo

Developments this month in the Democratic Republic of Congo could hold out hope for positive change, though it's too early to tell.

Dissident CNDP (National Congress for the Defense of the People) leader Jean Bosco Ntaganda declared the overthrow of powerful rebel leader General Laurent Nkunda in early January, declaring a cease-fire and calling for negotiations.

Then, within the week of Jan. 19, the governments of Rwanda and the DRC collaborated to flush out Hutu militants responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide who are now in the Congo. On Jan. 23, reports came out that the two countries collaborated to arrest Nkunda. Rwandan authorities finally cornered him in Rwanda. The DRC government is now calling for his extradition to the Congo for trial. The *New York Times* reported on Jan. 25 that there is some evidence the CNDP may be dissolving, as Nkunda's formerly well-organized troops appear to be disbanding and withdrawing from many areas. The Christian Peacemaker Team in Goma reported that the UN mission in the DRC was sweeping north from Goma to take over some of the areas the CNDP were withdrawing from, such as Rutshuru.

While at least one human rights organization applauded the arrest of Nkunda, and some are hopeful for change, many are still skeptical of real change coming and are suspicious of the motivations behind the collaboration between Rwanda and the DRC. In addition—despite his calls for a cease-fire—Ntaganda, Nkunda's former chief-of-staff, is wanted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court and is known as the Terminator for his ruthlessness as a CNDP soldier. There is also uncertainty as to how CNDP troops loyal to Nkunda will react. Civilians are also nervous as they see the Congolese army and now Rwandan troops moving about in the countryside, heavily armed, in their attempt to arrest members of the Hutu rebel army the FDLR (Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda), considering the history of human rights violations by both armies.

The collaboration between the DRC and Rwanda is a recent turnaround, as is the arrest of Nkunda by Rwanda. Despite arguments to the contrary, a UN-mandated group reported on Dec. 12, 2008, that the Congolese army was supporting Hutu rebel forces (FDLR), Rwanda was backing Nkunda's CNDP and all have been cited with human rights violations, including rape, murder, kidnapping of children for soldier recruitment, and illicit mining taxation and trade.—*Wendy Lehman*

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The Mennonite

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What went wrong with Winnipeg summit?

Church leaders consider future of joint meetings after low U.S. participation.

Pam Peters-Pries

Jim Schrag

Executive staff from Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA want to continue to look for ways to encourage members from both churches to meet together, in spite of low U.S. turnout at last July's binational gathering in Winnipeg, Man.

That was one of the messages that came out of November 2008's Joint Executive Committee (JEC) meeting in Sioux Falls, S.D., said MC Canada moderator Andrew Reesor-McDowell, who attended the meeting with general secretary Robert J. Suderman.

"It is my view that Mennonite Church USA is a highly valued and primary church partner to MC Canada," Reesor-McDowell wrote in an email. "There are historic ties that nurture and mutually build us up as we work on our separate and important national church agendas."

Just 61 U.S. Mennonites participated in the People's Summit for Faithful Living at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, July 8-10, 2008, with most of those registrants coming from Mennonite Church USA agencies.

> **The turnout was so low that—somebody just has to say it—it was a little bit embarrassing, if not offensive.**—Tim Reimer

Meanwhile, there were roughly 450 Canadian Mennonite representatives. The goal of the summit was to build relationships between the two churches at grassroots levels as well as to generate discussion about what it means to be countercultural in today's world.

"The turnout was so low that it was almost—somebody just has to say it—it was a little bit embarrassing, if not offensive," said Tim Reimer, pastor at Danforth Mennonite Church in Toronto in a phone interview. "Something went wrong. I think it was planned well. I think the workshops were good, but something was obviously out of tune."

The JEC doesn't think that low attendance signifies a lack of interest in future connections between the two churches, Reesor-McDowell said. He added that the two churches share commitments to Mennonite Publishing Network, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. Face-to-face meetings between the two churches are important from time to time.

"We don't know why people who didn't come didn't come," said Pam Peters-Pries, executive secretary of MC Canada Support Services and one of the gathering's key organizers.

She added that it could have been the result of a variety of factors: People don't find it important to meet if there's not a delegate session attached to the event, the location was a hindrance, people didn't have enough information, finances, or maybe they weren't interested in the theme.

In defense of Mennonite Church USA, she wondered how many Canadians would have attended a learning summit in the United States, saying, "I don't think it would have been 500."

Jim Schrag, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, shared many of Peters-Pries' sentiments. "It was disappointing," he said in a phone interview of the low U.S. turnout, adding that organizers had hoped for at least 200 U.S. participants. Schrag said that he is not sure what the message is in the low turnout, but Mennonite Church USA and MC Canada need to work together to decide what the next step is.

"I don't think it's for U.S. folks to make statements about the future of this, or for Canadians to make statements about the future of this. They should make statements together," he said.

Peters-Pries said that 154 of the 233 surveys filled out by summit participants indicated they think it is important for the churches to meet and would probably attend again. "People aren't ready to say, 'This is just like any [other] relationship,'" she said, adding that the history that MC Canada and MC USA share "shouldn't be let go lightly."

—*Aaron Epp of the* Canadian Mennonite

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Mennonites join antigun violence rally

Two Mennonites arrested for civil disobedience after praying at gun store.

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Anna Groff

Demonstrators march against gun violence in North Philadelphia.

Oh, that's Philly." This is what people say about the city's ongoing gun violence, says Celmali Jaime.

"It's [an issue] that people have been really complacent with," adds Jaime, a Mennonite student at Eastern University, near Philadelphia, and member of Evangelical Garifuna in New York City.

But she is not content with the status quo. Jaime and other Mennonites joined a faith-based march and rally on Jan. 17 in North Philadelphia to prevent gun violence and "straw sales" (buying handguns in bulk so they can then be sold to people who could not pass a background check).

This demonstration concluded "Heeding God's Call: A Gathering on Peace," a joint effort of Church of the Brethren, Mennonite Church USA and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends, held Jan. 13-17 in Philadelphia.

Three-hundred seventy-five people from a variety of denominations and faith traditions attended the gathering. Forty communities of faith in Philadelphia joined to confront gun violence.

On Jan. 16, the demonstrators gathered at the Holy Ghost Headquarters Church before marching to the Colosimo Gun Center, where they called on the owner, James Colosimo, to sign a "code of conduct" to reduce illegal trafficking of guns. Wal-Mart, top gun seller in America, has already signed the code.

The clerk refused to allow them in the gun store, so they sat in front of the door. The police came, asked them to leave and gave three warnings before making arrests.

Two Mennonites—Fred Kauffman and Drick Boyd—were arrested for civil disobedience along with five others. Kauffman is Mennonite Central Committee's Philadelphia program coordinator and Boyd is a member of West Philadelphia Mennonite Church and professor at Eastern University. Kauffman was released at 4 a.m. on Jan. 17, but Boyd was held an additional 12 hours.

"As far as anyone can tell, this was just the random nature of a somewhat sloppy bureaucracy," said Kauffman on Jan. 20.

The men were charged with misdemeanors: criminal conspiracy, disorderly conduct (except for Boyd) and blocking a highway or any public sidewalk. Earlier, police arrested five other activists associated with the gathering on Jan. 14 for refusing to leave the gun center.

Andy Peifer, member of West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship, facilitated the conversation with Colosimo and the actions in front of the gun store. The first meeting with Colosimo began on Dec. 17, 2008, with eight local faith leaders. From Jan. 14-17, activists had a presence in front of the store. The action on Jan. 17 was the culmination of this work, Peifer said on Jan. 16. Peifer said that Colosimo claims he fulfills nine out of the 10 points of the code, point nine being the "Computerized crime gun trace log and alert system."

Susan Mark Landis, Mennonite Church USA peace advocate, served as one of the conveners for the gathering—that grew from a vision of a member of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting—for the historic peace churches to host Christians from other denominations.

"Sharing an understanding of Christian peacemaking is a major part of our interchurch work, so I was hooked," says Mark Landis. "Unfortunately, other denominations did not catch this vision, and there were only a few people in attendance from other than the historic peace churches."

The gathering was held the week before Martin Luther King Jr. Day and many speakers paid tribute to the life and ministry of King. Vincent Harding, historian and activist, participated the entire week by leading the epilogue after worship services and a plenary session. Harding co-founded Mennonite House—an interracial voluntary service center and civil rights movement gathering place in Atlanta. He also drafted speeches for Martin Luther King Jr.

Ched Myers, theologian and plenary speaker on Jan. 13, called for a "three-way conversation" between the tradition of Martin Luther King Jr., Jesus and the historic peace churches. Myers critiqued Christians for elevating Jesus "off the earth," forgetting his human and political nature and ignoring the similarities between his ministry and King's ministry.—*Anna Groff*

Celmali Jaime

Vincent Harding

The full-length version of this article is available at www.themennonite.org.

Mississippi church breaks racial barriers

Church that used to meet on grounds of whites-only school has new building

Vada Snider

Brianna McFarland helps Jared Miller in the kindergarten and preschool class at Open Door Mennonite Church in Jackson, Miss.

Horace McMillon has big dreams for the small church he serves in Jackson, Miss. "I'd like to see a family resource center, marriage enrichment and counseling, financial training," he says. "We want to partner more with the day-care and after-school programs that rent from us—to broaden kids' experience with gardening, drama, a gospel choir. Without a building it wouldn't be possible to hatch these dreams."

Today, thanks to a loan from Church Extension Services (CES), McMillon's dreams for Open Door Mennonite Church are closer to becoming reality.

When McMillon began serving as pastor of Open Door Mennonite Church in January 2006, the congregation was renting several portable units on the grounds of a closed school. The school had been built as a whites-only private school immediately after desegregation.

"I think it is interesting, especially with our focus on racial reconciliation, that we were meeting in a facility that was built to keep blacks out," says McMillon.

But by the time McMillon came to Open Door, the facility was in poor repair and getting worse.

"That place went so far downhill," says longtime Open Door member Eric Palmer. "One Sunday morning we came in, and it had been vandalized. Windows had been broken and fire extinguishers sprayed everywhere."

It got to the point that people were afraid to come to church, especially for evening activities.

When McMillon was installed as pastor of Open Door, his good friends Chuck and Bonnie Neufeld came to Jackson for the service. A graduate of Chicago Theological Seminary, McMillon began his pastoral ministry with the Neufelds at Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

"We talked about finances, and Chuck mentioned CES," says McMillon. "To get a bank loan we would have needed a 20 percent down payment and a track record of paying. With CES, we were able to get 100 percent financing as long as we could show the ability to repay the loan."

McMillon and the building committee, chaired by Julius Phillips, began spending hours with real estate agents. They finally stumbled onto two buildings that were owned by another church. The second building was already leased out to an alternative school, and that rental income enabled Open Door to receive the CES loan.

Today a day care rents the school building, and another church also leases space. In addition, sister congregation Des Allemands Mennonite Church in Louisiana helped substantially, donating $18,000 during the first year of building ownership to set up an emergency fund at Open Door.

Being rooted in place has given Open Door Mennonite Church new life in many ways.

"We are growing in participation. People who used to come two Sundays a month are coming every Sunday, and we've attracted several new families since we have this building," says Palmer. "Our facility has always been one in a long list of barriers that people had to overcome to become a part of us."

The new church building is also allowing more outreach to the surrounding community. During the summer of 2008, almost 50 children participated in vacation Bible school. Last July, the congregation invited back former members and friends for Fun in the Sun. And in October, Open Door helped host a "Hollyween Celebration," complete with a firetruck for the children to explore.

"With this building we're now connecting to the surrounding community. We took the van around this summer and picked up neighborhood kids for Bible school. I've always believed in having a multipurpose church. It fits in with what we want to do," says Rhoda Yoder, whose father Raymond Byler was the founding pastor of Open Door.

—Vada Snider for Mennonite Church USA

CALENDAR

The **Orrville Mennonite Church, Orrville, Ohio,** is having its ***centennial celebration June 27-28***. Friends of the church or anyone who has attended Orrville Mennonite during the last 100 years is most welcome.

Participants at the ***2009 Mennonite Health Assembly*** in **Cleveland, Ohio,** March 19-22 will work and worship together to bring alive the conference theme, "Building Community in a Sea of Individualism." All participants will have numerous opportunities to discuss common interests in a variety of forums. The Mennonite Health Assembly will include 35 workshops in two days, networking lunches and daily worship. Registration materials and a link for reservations at the Renaissance Hotel are available at www.mhsonline.org/php/assembly/. Those who register by Feb. 6 will receive a discount.

WORKERS

Birky, Chris, ended a term as pastor at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Kouts, Ind., on Dec. 31, 2008.

Chartrand, Bruce, was licensed as a pastor at First Mennonite Church of New Bremen, Lowville, N.Y. on Nov. 16, 2008.

Miller, T. Lee, ended a term as pastor at Howard-Miami Mennonite Church, Kokomo, Ind., on Dec. 31, 2008.

Schmucker, Eli, ended a term as pastor at Family Worship Center at the Lighthouse, Goshen, Ind., on Nov. 30, 2008.

Stair, Tim, ended a term as pastor of calling and outreach at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on Dec. 31, 2008.

Zehr, Doug, ended a term as lead pastor at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind., on Jan. 1.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Bauman, Brielle Lauren, Dec. 16, 2008, to Steven and Andrea Landes Bauman, Sellersville, Pa.

Berahzer, Gabriel Evan, Dec. 11, 2008, to Stacey and Damien Berahzer, Marietta, Ga.

Burkhalter-Blosser, Elijah Loren, Dec. 16, 2008, to Chris and Emily Burkhalter-Blosser, Philadelphia, Pa.

Douglas, Reid Hutchinson and Grey Carter Douglas (twins), Jan. 12, to Spencer and April Hutchinson Douglas, Charlottesville, Va.

Garner, Asa Reuben Zidermanis, Nov. 17, 2008, to John and Jenni Schrock Garner, Newton, Kan.

Haskell, Julian David, Jan. 6, Ivan Haskell and Christine Waanders, Philadelphia.

Herris, Natalie Rose, Jan. 6, to Keith and Melissa Anderson Herris, McKenzie, Tenn.

Kooker, Kye Abram, Oct. 30, 2008, to Zach and Mary Wittmer Kooker, Dalton, Ohio

Kratz, Lily Elizabeth, Jan. 10, to Jonathan and Tamara Greaser Kratz, Harrisonburg, Va.

Martin, Emilia Rose Reinford, July 28, 2008, to Terry and Wanda Reinford Martin, Goshen, Ind.

Martin, Jared Alexander, Dec. 30, 2008, to Jeff and Lisa Rose Martin, Goshen, Ind.

Nickel, Corynn Jade, Dec. 15, 2008, to Kevin and Yvette Peters Nickel, Newton, Kan.

Petrucelli, Mara Elizabeth, Dec. 8, 2008, to Michael and Jennifer Lincavage Petrucelli, Schwenksville, Pa.

Rittenhouse, Elyse Noelle, Dec. 11, 2008, to Matthew and Emily Martin Rittenhouse, Doylestown, Pa.

Schlabach, Audrey Elizabeth, Nov. 18, 2008, to Joel and Megan Beachy Schlabach, Hartville, Ohio.

Stahl, John Michael, Dec. 29, 2008, to Jason and Tara Yeackley Stahl, Seward, Neb.

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ISRAEL/PALESTINE (June 24-July 5)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN SHARP (June 29-July 12)
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ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (July 23-August 4)
SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29-August 11)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (September 5-18)
THE ROAD to JERUSALEM (September 11-22)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE for GERMAN-SPEAKING PERSONS (September 16-29)
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MARRIAGES

Arnold/Roberds: Derek Arnold, Hesston, Kan., and Melody Roberds, Hutchinson, Kan., Jan. 3, at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Ballou/Carlson: Amanda Ballou, Mount Pleasant, Iowa, and Steve Carlson, Fairfield, Iowa, Dec. 13, 2008, at Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Mount Pleasant.

Browning/Lengacher: Morgan Browning, Denver, Colo., and Annie Lengacher, Denver, Dec. 28, 2008, at First Mennonite Church, Denver.

Martin/Yoder: Katrina Martin, Harrisonburg, Va., and Paul Yoder, Harrisonburg, Dec. 27, 2008, at Zion Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va.

DEATHS

Albrecht, Oleeda Sutter, 89, Tiskilwa, Ill., died Sept. 8, 2008. Spouse: Marion Albrecht. Parents: Levi and Alma Nafziger Sutter. Children: Arlee Blackburn, Wayne, Connie Krabill, Sylvia Aschlimen; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Sept. 13 at Willow Springs Mennonite Church, Tiskilwa.

Bishop, Paul Loux, 75, Perkasie, Pa., died Dec. 15, 2008. Spouse: Betty Arlene Derstine Bishop. Parents: Leon and Lizzie Loux Bishop. Children: Sharon Moyer, Denise Rick, Kevin, Keith; 10 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 18 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Delp, Gloria A. Stover, 80, Sellersville, Pa., died Jan. 4. Spouse: Robert W. Delp (deceased). Parents: William and Miriam Alderfer Stover. Stepchildren: R. Michael, Randy, Jeffery; six step-grandchildren; 11 step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 10 at Rockhill Mennonite Community, Sellersville.

Frey, Warren Edward, 85, Wauseon, Ohio, died Dec. 27, 2008. Spouse: Clara Stuckey Frey. Parents: Edward R. and Fannie Rupp Frey. Children: Jerry, Shirley Rychener, Kathy Piondexter, Samuel, Marabelle Schmucker, Allen; 16 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 30 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Glick, Elam H., 94, Belleville, Pa., died Dec. 30, 2008 of complications following a stroke. Spouse: Thelma A. Stoltzfus Glick. Parents: Gideon Sharp Glick and Nannie M. Yoder Glick. Children: Esther West, Darlis, Del, Loren; three grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 10 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

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Kandel, Clayton Mast, 88, Berlin, Ohio, died Jan. 8 of a heart attack. Spouse: Doris Miller Kandel (deceased). Parents: Joseph E. and Lydia Mast Kandel. Children: Ethel Miller, Shirley Kandel, Kenneth, Keith, Marlene Swartzendruber, Karla Kandel, Julie Kandel; 17 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 12 at Martins Creek Mennonite Church, Millersburg, Ohio.

Kennel, Mahlon V., 85, Shickley, Neb., died Dec. 29, 2008, in a car accident. Spouse: Ruby D. Saltzman Kennel (deceased). Parents: Peter and Anna Reeb Kennel. Children: Rodney, Conley, Audrey Yordy, Sharon Lubbers; 11 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 2 at Salem Mennonite Church, Shickley.

Kennel, Ruby D. Saltzman, 83, Shickley, Neb., died Dec. 29, 2008, in a car accident. Spouse: Mahlon V. Kennel (deceased). Parents: Ben and Gertrude Schweitzer Saltzman. Children: Rodney, Conley, Audrey Yordy, Sharon Lubbers; 11 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 2 at Salem Mennonite Church, Shickley.

Keyser, Carl B., 70, Scottdale, Pa., died Jan. 8. Spouse: Nancy C. Sprinkle Keyser. Parents: Edwin and Maude Errett Keyser. Children: Scott, Mark; five grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 12 at Scottdale Mennonite Church.

King, Margaret V. King Schloneger, 96, Orrville, Ohio, died Jan. 14. Spouse: C.A. King (deceased). Spouse: Melvin D. Schloneger (deceased). Parents: John Howard and Emma Metzler Clark. Children: Wendell Schloneger, Will Schloneger, Ronald Schloneger, Carolyn Camp, Corrine Sedwick, Wayne King, Marion King; 12 grandchildren; nine step-grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren; 13 step-great-grandchildren; four great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 17 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville, Ohio.

Leer, Ira J., 91, Middlebury, Ind., died Dec. 16, 2008. Spouse: Leota Miller Pletcher Leer. Spouse: Grayce Lambright Leer (deceased). Parents: Elvin and Macy Yoder Leer. Children: Myron, Patricia Eicher, Margaret Ann Miller, Diane Sue Stealy; two grandchildren; 12 step-grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; 23 step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 20 at Miller-Stewart Funeral Home, Middlebury.

Loewen, Anne Hildebrand, 88, Altona, Manitoba, died Dec. 18, 2008. Spouse: Jim E. Loewen (deceased); parents: Henry I. and Maria Heinrichs Hildebrand. Children: Esther Rempel, Gladys Wencek, Brian, Sandra Frankel; 10 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 23 at Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church.

Martin, Irene N., 92, Ephrata, Pa., died Jan. 13. Parents: Elam and Lavina Gingrich Martin. Funeral: Jan. 17 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

Nafziger, Marjorie A. Aeschliman, 95, Pettisville, Ohio, died Jan. 13. Spouse: Ervin J. Nafziger (deceased). Parents: Enos and Dora Neuhauser Aeschliman. Children: Leon, Joe, Gil, Carolyn Snyder, Tiye Calavan, Alene DeCoster, Julia Nafziger, Angela Gerig, Stanley, George; 18 grandchildren; 10 step-grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren; 24 step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 17 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

Shantz, Milo Daniel, 76, Waterloo, Ontario, died Jan. 6. Spouse: Laura Martin Shantz. Parents: Irvin and Lovina Roth Shantz. Children: Jenny Shantz Moolenbeck, Christine Shantz, Sandra Shantz Benninger, Margaret Shantz Bezzo, Marcus; six grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 9 at Waterloo North Mennonite Church.

Shaver, Carl Ralston, 83, Harrisonburg, Va., died Jan. 15. Spouse: Ruby A. Armentrout Shaver. Parents: Otho and Mary Mauck Shaver. Children: Kenneth R., Dennis E.; eight grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 19 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Smoker, Dorothy Virginia Malin, 91, West Chester, Pa., died Jan. 2 of Alzheimer's disease. Spouse: Arthur Emanuel Smoker, Sr. (deceased). Parents: George Griffith Malin Sr. and Grace Sherwood Haldeman Malin. Children: Arthur E. Jr., Howard Paul, Emerson Ralph, Robert Elvin; nine grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 7 at Frazer Mennonite Church, Malvern (Frazer), Pa.

Troyer, Norma L. Reber, 78, Mio, Mich., died Dec. 28, 2008, of cancer. Spouse: Emmerson E. Troyer. Parents: Elmer and Alice Kauffman Reber. Children: Ardis Miller, Rodney, Brenda Kauffman, Kyle; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 31 at Fairview Mennonite Church, Fairview, Mich.

Yoder, Cletus "Clete," 59, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 12. Spouse: Cheryl Peck Yoder. Parents: Joseph and Ida Lehman Yoder. Children: Jennifer King, Jeanette Yoder; two grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 16 at Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Yoder, Clifford J., 93, Johnson, Iowa, died Jan. 6 of natural causes. Spouse: Ruth Ann Leibig Yoder. Spouse: Marjorie Stutzman Yoder (deceased). Spouse: Helen Miller Yoder (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Mattie Miller Yoder. Children: Peggy Sue Blosser, Harold; one grandchild; two great-grandchildren; 13 great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 9 at Kalona Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.

Yoder, Edna M., 89, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 1. Parents: Monroe and Emma Schlabach Yoder. Funeral: Jan. 4 at Yoder-Culp Funeral Home, Goshen.

Yoder, George N., 94, Wellman, Iowa, died Jan. 4. Spouse: Leona Yoder (deceased). Parents: Arthur G. and Lydia Swartzendruber Yoder. Children: John Arthur, Carroll, Judy Moskalik, Alan, Jerold, Lowell, George C.; 12 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 7 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa.

Ziegler, Albert D., 91, Columbiana, Ohio, died Jan. 5. Spouse: Mabel L. Holloway Ziegler (deceased). Parents: Daniel and Mary Minger Ziegler. Children: Wanda Ziegler, Sherman A., Mildren Trotter; three grandchildren; one great-grandchild. A memorial service will be held at Midway Mennonite Church at a later date.

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to Menn-Obits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6053. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

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Put Down Your Sword: Answering the Gospel Call to Creative Nonviolence by John Dear (Eerdmans, 2008, $16) invites us into Jesus' way of nonviolence as presented by the Gospels. Arguing that all Christians must follow Christ's example in the ways of peace, Dear outlines the many actions he has taken following the path of nonviolence.

Creation Care: Keepers of the Earth by Luke Gascho (MMA, 2008, $12) presents the spiritual basis for environmental stewardship and how people's choices affect air and water quality, energy use and the climate while impacting their global neighbors. Order at www.bookstore.MMA-online.org or 800-348-7468.

Overcoming Evil God's Way by Stephen Russell (Faith Builders Resource Group, 2008, $12.99) asserts that the biblical message offers hope of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation in place of hatred, vengeance and fear.

All Right Now: Finding Consensus on Ethical Questions by Timothy J. Geddert (Herald Press, 2008, $16.99) offers concrete help to Christian communities as they struggle with ethical questions and try to determine appropriate ethical guidelines.

Deconstructing Theodicy: Why Job Has Nothing to Say to the Puzzle of Suffering by David B. Burrell (Brazos Press, 2008, $19.99) shows that Job actually deconstructs the theories of theodicy proposed by commentators over the centuries.

God of Surprises by Gerald W. Hughes (Eerdmans, 2008, $18) takes readers on a spiritual journey of discovery and change. This third edition contains a new preface by Hughes that says how he came to write it.

Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them by Earl Creps (Jossey-Bass, 2008, $24.95) shows how the church can benefit from letting younger people teach their elders.

The God of Intimacy and Action: Reconnecting Ancient Spiritual Practices, Evangelism and Justice by Tony Campolo and Mary Albert Darling (Jossey-Bass, 2008, $14.95) uncovers mystical "holy habits" that modern people can employ to open themselves further to God, thereby nurturing their spiritual intimacy.

Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness by Stanley Hauerwas and Jean Vanier (IVP Books, 2008, $15) explores the contours of countercultural community that embodies a different way of being and witnesses to a new order—one marked by radical forms of gentleness, peacemaking and faithfulness.

Heidegger: A (Very) Critical Introduction by S. J. McGrath (Eerdmans, 2008, $16) offers a series of incisive takes on the well-known philosopher's thought, leading readers to a point from which they can begin or continue their own relationship with him.

Practical Theology: An Introduction by Richard R. Osmer (Eerdmans, 2008, $24) seeks to teach congregational leaders—including but not limited to clergy—the requisite knowledge and skills to meet challenging situations with sensitivity and creativity. He writes that theological reflection is grounded in the spirituality of leaders.

The Jewish Approach to Repairing the World (*Tikkun Olam*) by Elliot N. Dorff with Cory Willson (Jewish Lights, 2008, $16.99) explores different facets of the important Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*, including caring for the poor, the power of words, duties of spouses to each other, children's duties to their parents and more.

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Mennonite Mission Network

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MCC Washington Office Spring Seminar in Wichita, Kan., March 28-30. Learn about the global food crisis; its causes and some solutions, worship and speakers: mcc.org/us/washington or 202-544-6564.

Hesston College seeks applicants for a ***head women's softball coach***. As a part of the Athletic Department, the person in this part-time position will be responsible for all aspects of the softball program, including recruiting, scheduling, managing a budget, travel arrangements, etc. Qualifications include experience and knowledge of fastpitch softball, the ability to teach the skills and strategy of the game to college student-athletes, recruiting skills, love for students and commitment to Mennonite higher education. This position will be open with duties commencing August 2009. Review of applications begins immediately and continues until the position is filled. To apply, send resumé, application and faith statement as found at www.hesston.edu/employment to Art Mullet, Athletic Director, Box 3000, Hesston, KS 67062. EOE

Part-time conference minister for **New York Mennonite Conference** beginning immediately. Conference profile available: http://nymennon.bfn.org/. MLI required. Contact Dale Beebee dbeebee@roadrunner.com, 585-593-5598. Applications accepted through February 2009.

The Mennonite Heritage Cruise and its international resource team invites you to join the ***15th annual cruise in Ukraine on the Dnieper River and Black Sea*** in late September 2009. This has been the ultimate 15-day roots discovery experience for 2,500 descendants of Russian Mennonites and others. For details of the cruise Google "Mennonite Heritage Cruise" or phone Marina Unger, 800-387-1488, ext. 2827.

Swamp Mennonite Church (www.swampmennonite.org) seeks a passionate full-time ***senior pastor*** to focus on preaching, pastoral care and equipping leaders. SMC is a Christ-centered, welcoming church (regular attendance of 140) that is a fellowship of believers committed to serving our community, living in peace and making Anabaptist/Mennonite faith and worship relevant in the Quakertown, Pa., area. Seminary training is required. Interested people should email the Lead Pastor Search Committee at info@swampmennonite.org.

Mountville Mennonite Church (Lancaster Mennonite Conference) seeking ***full-time associate pastor for youth ministry*** with training or experience in youth ministry and discipleship, commitment to Anabaptist core values and passion for reaching unchurched youth. Starting Summer 2009. Applications requested by March 1. Contact: Jim Herr, jcjbc5@aol.com; 717-285-2153.

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Will you hold me as I held you?

Michael A. King, Telford, Pa., is pastor, Spring Mount (Pa.) Mennonite Church; publisher, Cascadia Publishing House LLC; and editor, *DreamSeeker Magazine*.

Scattered throughout Scripture are variations on the saying that "all flesh is grass" or, as Psalm 103:15-16 puts it, "As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, its place knows it no more." The image has come to me often these days. It came as I helped my father join my mother in assisted living. It came as the aching of an old knee injury joined a twisting of the other knee and the deepening awareness that I, too, am fading grass. It came as a loved congregational co-worker received word of cancer.

We are grass. The wind passes over us. We are gone. And our place knows us no more. Sorrow lurks here or, maybe more accurately, sorrow overwhelms here. We are born falling into death. The flesh as grass image forces us to see, feel, mourn this.

Interestingly, however, Scripture rarely touches on people as grass without then underscoring that something is not grass: God. As Psalm 103:17 promises, "But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting."

Bummer. The hope travels with and doesn't simply overcome the sorrow. Psalm 103 gives us sorrow and hope inextricably mingled, inviting awareness that the grass withers even as we pray there is more.

I also suspect that for many of us it's in family life that we experience this mingling in its most primal form. We're born into family as children and experience in family the shock of becoming, in turn, the parent. We start out seeing parents as giants in the land. I doubt we ever quite get over our disbelief that the teenage bagger at the grocery store is suddenly younger than we are. Wait, now it's our teacher. Whoa, now it's our boss. Hey, now it's the president of the United States.

And the wind keeps blowing. Until one day we find ourselves holding the parents who first held us. Then how could sorrow not swamp us? Something seems so backward about this. How did we get from dependent to depended on? How can it be that we now seek to offer a haven to the ones who first offered it to us?

How can it be that we who held our children, mentored them, provided for them, will now be held by them?

And how can it be that we are to do this even as our own bodies are starting to wear out, promising our own time of being no longer even symbolically our children's haven of rest? How can it be that we who held our children, mentored them, provided for them (as best grass can), will now be held by them?

Will I one day be napping in the golden (but also fading) sun of late afternoon because I no longer sleep well nights and my time as grass is nearly gone? And will my daughter come in to wake me up just enough to say goodbye while trying not to ruin my nap? Will I wake up just enough from the fog of sleep to see her dear face and try to touch her, with a faint smile on my own face, before sleep takes me back? Will she leave my room trying not to cry, as she now lives her time of disbelief that it has come to this even as I am likewise dreaming the same, there in that darkening room?

Yes. Yes, unless some earlier tragedy strikes first, yes. Yes, I will someday need to be held by her as once I held her. I don't believe it. That's why I keep saying yes. But yes.

Where in such sorrow is the steadfast love of the Lord? I have enough faith some of the time (but only some of the time, grass that I am) to trust that if it's everlasting, then it's there when the grass dies. Then it gathers the grass in its arms once even daughters can no longer hold it.

But God's steadfast love is also made flesh in family life. All families are grass, all are mortal, so all families manage this only fleetingly. Yet at our best, learning from the one who once pitched his tent among us (as John 1:14 so memorably puts it), we become God's body to each other. Our parents' hands holding our fragile baby selves are God's hands. Our own hands holding our parents' fragile, aging selves are God's hands. And our commitment to span each other's needs and stages across life's journey from cradle to grave—until you hold me as I once held you—is one way we begin to teach each other that the love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. TM

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Mennonite politics

Gordon Houser

Do not put your trust in princes.—Psalm 146:3

Whether we like it or not, we are political beings. The important question is how we live out our political life. And more important, as Nelson Kraybill makes clear (see page 8), is where our allegiance lies.

"Politics" derives from the Greek work "polis," often translated "city" but primarily denoting a decision-making body. Politics reflects the workings of a community of people making decisions together in order to carry out their goals, the kind of life they've set for themselves. That dynamic is a key element of Mennonite spirituality.

While "politics" carries a complex of meanings related to governing or setting policy, it also has for many a pejorative sense ("Oh, that's just politics.") that identifies it with seeking power at the expense of truth or justice. The politics of Jesus, which John Howard Yoder used as the title for his groundbreaking book, is one of servanthood, not dominance. This kind of decision-making out of a unity in the Spirit, where no one person dominates, is what the church is called to practice.

We practice politics as we gather together in worship and make decisions about how we are to serve our Lord faithfully.

Unfortunately, for most of us, our sense of politics is determined by individualism and self-interest, the basis of the modern nation-state. This understanding runs counter to the Christian narrative, writes Tripp York in *The Purple Crown*, "which understands the condition of true human freedom as participation with God and God's creation."

Our nation has come through a so-called political season and elected a new president. This process has dominated much of our media's attention. That narrative tempts us to "put our trust in princes," whether to find hope in the presidency of Barack Obama or to find despair.

As followers of Jesus Christ, however, we belong to a different political body with a different government and leader. We may mouth this truth each Sunday, but does it affect our daily living? Does our belonging to Jesus affect the decisions we make about what we do, where we go and how we spend our money?

The early Anabaptists called Matthew 18:15-20 "the rule of Christ." This passage is about decision-making, about discernment, figuring out who's telling the truth in a conflict and what is the right course of action. It includes two references to "the church" and concludes with the familiar sentence, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (verse 20).

We experience that presence in our worship, as we name Jesus our Lord, as we celebrate Communion. York writes: "The Eucharist makes participation in the divine economy possible because it makes particular claims on the participants' bodies. In the physical act of eating and drinking Christ, we commit ourselves to a life like Christ's life."

In Mennonite spirituality (at least in theory), community discernment is a big deal. It's how we are to read the Bible. We study it individually, but we are to talk about what it means with our brothers and sisters. It also emphasizes the participation of everyone.

Four of the articles in this 40-page special issue are about Mennonite congregations. As we seek to live faithfully in the empire that is America, we dare not act alone. We need one another to figure out what we are to do, where we are to go and how we are to spend our money.

Our culture tells us our faith is to be something private and to be lived out "spiritually" (as opposed to bodily). But "if the church is to be true to its specific vocation, the making of disciples of all nations," York writes, "then it must practice her own politics rather than adopt the politics of those that surround her."

We practice politics as we gather together in worship and make decisions about how we are to serve our Lord faithfully. And such service will bear witness that our allegiance is to the Lamb, not to war-making nations.

Our service will involve complex, difficult decisions. Our Lord does not call us to separate ourselves from a hurting world in order to gain some sense of purity. We serve not to maintain our lifestyle but to bring healing and hope to the world. That may involve the nitty-gritty politics of schools, taxes or health care. But we do so in service of the Servant who is our King.—*gh*

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walking with Jesus

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God's extravagant generosity

Clarence Rempel is pastor of First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

Do you imagine God with a clenched hand or an open hand? Is the God you worship a giver or a taker?

For the past year I have been soaking in the spirit of God's generosity. The God of the Bible is the God of the open hand. Psalm 145:16 says, God, "you open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing" (TNIV). *The Message* translation is, "Generous to a fault, you lavish your favor on all creatures." Not only do we as humans experience God's generosity, but all living things, plants and animals, experience it.

God lavished beauty, complexity and grandeur in creating the world. Consider flowers. In the fall of 2007, Amanda, my wife, and I put in a perennial flower garden across the northeast corner of our backyard. We put in 70-some plants of a dozen varieties, and this past summer I loved walking the backyard to gaze at what was blooming, from the perfectly shaped trumpets of Asiatic lilies to the profuse blooms and bright colors of impatiens. We had lilies that bloom only a day and rose bushes covered with dozens of blooms. I am mesmerized by the intense colors and the abundant blooms.

Did you know that there are 600 varieties of asters and 25,000 varieties of orchids? Those are just two of 270,000 species of flowers. Why so many? What extravagance! What lavish, overwhelming beauty! God of the open hand has poured out his blessing in creation.

I am overwhelmed by the grandeur of God's creation. A thousand stars in the sky would be plenty. I can only keep track of a half dozen or so by name. We can actually see about 5,000 stars with the naked eye. Surely that would be enough. But our galaxy has 400 billion stars. And there are now 10 billion galaxies within reach of our most powerful telescopes. There are 70 sextillion stars (7 with 22 zeroes). To think of it another way, there are 10 times as many stars as all the grains of sand on all the world's beaches and in all the world's deserts. God of the open hand lavished complexity and majesty in the creation of the universe and the earth.

Why such grandeur, such beauty, such intricacy in God's creation? God says, "I made it for you to enjoy, to contemplate, to fire your imagination and to saturate your soul." In Genesis 2:16, the Lord completed the Garden of Eden and gave it to Adam. "Here it is. For you. You are free to eat of any tree of the garden. Enjoy." One tree Adam and Eve were not to eat from, but that's another story.

"Earth is drenched in God's affectionate satisfaction" (Psalm 33:5 *The Message*). The description of God's generous, extravagant creation continues: "The skies were made by God's command; he breathed the word and the stars popped out. He scooped Sea into his jug, put Ocean in his keg" (Psalm 33:6-7 *The Message*).

We become what we honor and worship. As we behold God as extravagantly generous, our hearts will bloom with greater generosity. Our churches will become baskets of generosity and beacons of hope. My congregation has been known to talk poor, as if God were tightfisted. "We can't decide. We can't find people. We don't have money. Or we have it, but people won't give it."

I dream that Mennonite Church USA will become a generous church, because God has been outrageously generous with us. "We can make up our minds and make decisions. We can get things done. We have willing, talented people resources. We have substantial financial resources, and we will commit them to God's mission. We have been blessed to be a blessing." Start your next church board or council meeting with this litany. TM

TheMennonite

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Cover: Photo by David Landis of Anna Dintaman on the Jesus Trail.

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

What about public schools?

After reading the annual Mennonite education issue (Jan. 20) of *The Mennonite*, I find myself wishing for an article comparable to Laurie Oswald Robinson's piece ("No Price Tag on Priceless Anabaptist Education for the Young") that would read, "No Price Tag on Priceless Public Education for the Young."

The decision to send our boys to the local public school was an intentional one, born out of many discussions with friends around the campfire on our Mennonite Central Committee assignment in southern Africa. What, we asked ourselves, would it be like to move back home and integrate ourselves in a local community in the same way that we had immersed ourselves in cross-cultural settings? What if we served on local school boards, sent our kids to the local school? What if we looked for the face of God in all the people in our new, adopted community?

As a graduate of a Mennonite high school, I am aware of the benefits of a Christian education. While I have at times lamented the shortcomings of a small, rural public school system and the messiness of local politics, I have no regrets about our decision to send our boys to public school and then off to Goshen (Ind.) College, where we see them move with ease among different groups of people and where they find themselves challenged in new ways in a college whose core values so closely mirror our desire for their faith development.—*Christine Nofsinger, Marcellus, Mich.*

Seminaries as seedbeds

I read with great interest the "Seminaries as Seedbeds" editorial by Everett J. Thomas (Jan. 20). It sounds like another attempt to "circle the wagons" and invest our future by becoming exclusive and not inclusive. What is missing is the most important quality of pastors (and all followers of Jesus), namely, that they follow Jesus. It is amazing to me that a movement started by the first Anabaptists so readily embraces institutional preservation as a worthy goal. This is especially painful because the radicals gave their lives, not to preserve institutions but to live out the call of Jesus as a gathered body of believers free from institutional constraint. It's difficult to see how Mennonite Church USA can possibly live out the call of Jesus to break down barriers and build a new humanity rooted in Jesus when it seems pretty clear that drawing boundaries along ethnic Mennonite and institutional lines is in vogue. —*Michael Danner, Metamora, Ill.*

Appreciation for preseminary pastors

The Jan. 20 editorial ("Seminaries as Seedbeds") caught my attention. It reminds us of the major shift in the calling and equipping of our pastoral leadership. Although I enthusiastically support these changes, I wish to express my appreciation to the pastors who served us in the preseminary years. For the most part they were called out of the pews of their home congregations, and there they carried out their ministry. They had modest library and training resources available to them. They preached sermons, served Communion, baptized the youth, married the betrothed, visited the sick and buried the dead. Demands on their time and skills were high, while financial support was low. They were expected to be self-supporting. They kept the Mennonite ship afloat through the turbulent waters of several world wars, a deep recession and the various gales of modernity. Perhaps a fitting expression of our gratitude could come in the form of a publication in the style of Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation*.—*Ross T. Bender, Goshen, Ind.*

In defense of *The Shack*

Regarding Gordon Houser's review of the book *The Shack* (Mediaculture, Jan. 20): There are many ways to judge a book. One of them is its effectiveness in speaking to others. This book has obviously done that as is witnessed to by the responses it has received. I do not believe that William Young's purpose was to write "good fiction" but to find a way to share what God had done for him with others. I experienced this book as communicating a profound truth in a way that has been able to reach many people, including me. I don't believe he meant this story to be theologically correct but rather to help communicate the truth of where God is when evil happens to us and

IN THIS ISSUE

Unlike our last two issues—the annual church school issue on Jan. 20 and the "national identity" issue on Feb. 3—this issue has no overriding theme. But as happens occasionally in our work, a subject appears several times with little planning. In this case, the subject is homelessness. On page 24, Lee Penner describes his work with homeless people in Harvey County, Kan. The editorial (page 32) calls for renewed attention to combat veterans increasing the ranks of the homeless. Jan Johnson (page 15) offers suggestions on how to prevent homelessness before it starts and cites a friend who says, "The church is the highway around Skid Row." In the story on page 8, Isaac Villegas describes his Wednesday noon meals with the homeless people who haunt his Sunday celebration of Lord's Table. —*Editor* others. This is a truth that many of us struggle to understand in spite of having read the Bible. *—Margaret W. Gale, Tiskilwa, Ill.*

Saddened by review of *The Shack*

Gordon Houser's column "*The Shack*: Simplistic, Didactic, Wildly Popular" saddened me. I understand that Houser objects to the quality of the writing. Perhaps the book's purpose was to meet nonbelievers where they are and introduce them to a God with whom they may not be familiar. And perhaps God needed to use a method not approved of by Houser in order to accomplish [God's] goals.

What I heard from Houser in his comments was a great deal of arrogance. It sounded like he was complaining about God's ways of working in the world. I heard the following in the review: "Lord, if you're going to use a work of popular fiction to introduce people to you, at least use an author who doesn't break the rules of good fiction writing by beginning the story with a discussion of the weather. And while you're at it, maybe you could pick an author with a clean record of pure Christian living. Oh, and don't let the author introduce any concepts not explicitly mentioned in the Bible because we don't want to get people started on the wrong foot with their theology."

But God didn't follow Houser's rules, and he seems upset about that. When did we Christians start believing that it was OK to tell God how to do his job? If even one person comes to faith because of *The Shack*, then God has accomplished what he set out to do. And how ironic that the Bible, of which Houser speaks so highly, is full of stories of God using unconventional ways of working in the world—ways that angered those who thought they knew what God should be doing and how he should be doing it.*—Janet Szabo, Kalispell, Mont.*

Opposes CPT policy change

Regarding Ron Sider's letter in the Jan. 6 Readers Say: While I understand the reasons—having to do with church politics—for Sider to encourage Christian Peacemaker Teams not to appear to "promote … a homosexual/lesbian lifestyle," I would encourage Sider and others not to use the word "lifestyle" in that context. Using that term betrays an ignorance of the variety of sexual practices among gay and lesbian people—a variety as broad as that among heterosexuals.

As with heterosexuals, gay and lesbian people's sex lives include everything from celibate singleness to short-term hookups to lifelong monogamy. The myth of a "homosexual lifestyle" is a vicious stereotype that, like most stereotypes, can come only from ignorance or malice.

As a CPT supporter, my preference would be for CPT to go the other direction from Sider's suggestion and, as part of his recommended expansion, put together an additional team focused on "getting in the way" of cruel and uncompassionate acts by American churches toward gay and lesbian people.*—John Zimmerman, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa*

The post office dog

Today I received my copy of *The Mennonite* along with an apology from the post office saying that it had been damaged on its way to me. It looked like my dog had gotten it and torn it to shreds. One whole corner was missing. My dog, Molly, immediately tore the envelope in as many pieces as the magazine. So, can I have another copy mailed to me and hope the "post office dog" doesn't shred it?*—Eunice Gautsche, Lexington, Ky.*

Editors note: *This letter was one of a dozen complaints we received after our switch to a lighter paper for the January issues. We are also beginning to hear from subscribers who never received one or both of their January issues—probably because the back page with the address label was torn off. Therefore, we have abandoned efforts to use a lighter paper. If you did not receive either of the January issues, please call 800-790-2498.*

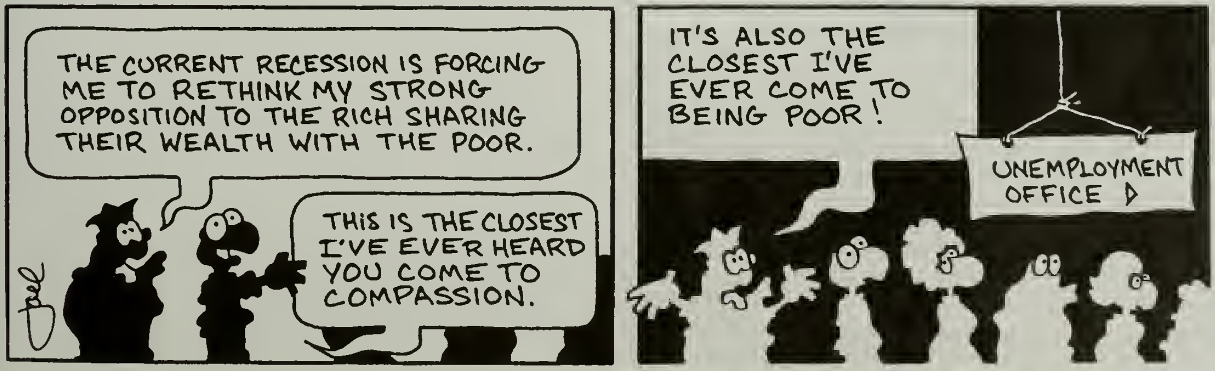
ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Regarding the book *The Shack*: (73 votes)

- ○ I do not plan to read it (44%)
- ○ I read/am reading it (44%)
- ○ I plan to read it (8%)
- ○ Not sure (4%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


THE CURRENT RECESSION IS FORCING ME TO RETHINK MY STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE RICH SHARING THEIR WEALTH WITH THE POOR.
THIS IS THE CLOSEST I'VE EVER HEARD YOU COME TO COMPASSION.
IT'S ALSO THE CLOSEST I'VE EVER COME TO BEING POOR!
UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICE ▷

IN BRIEF

Mission Network announces new senior executive

To her new post as senior executive for advancement for Mennonite Mission Network, Paula Killough brings theological background, economic and communication experience and a commitment to church leadership. Since January 2008, Killough served as program administrator for the U.S. ministries department of Mennonite Mission Network. In her new position, which began in September 2008, she leads the church relations, development and marketing and communication departments. Killough discovered the Mennonite church as a young adult in Denver and joined Arvada (Colo.) Mennonite Church in 1980, then attended Seattle Mennonite Church before beginning at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Millions benefit from microcredit campaign

NEW YORK—More than 106 million of the world's poorest families received a microloan in 2007, surpassing a goal set 10 years earlier, according to a report by the Microcredit Summit Campaign, which Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) is part of. Microloans are used to help people living in extreme poverty start or expand a range of tiny businesses.

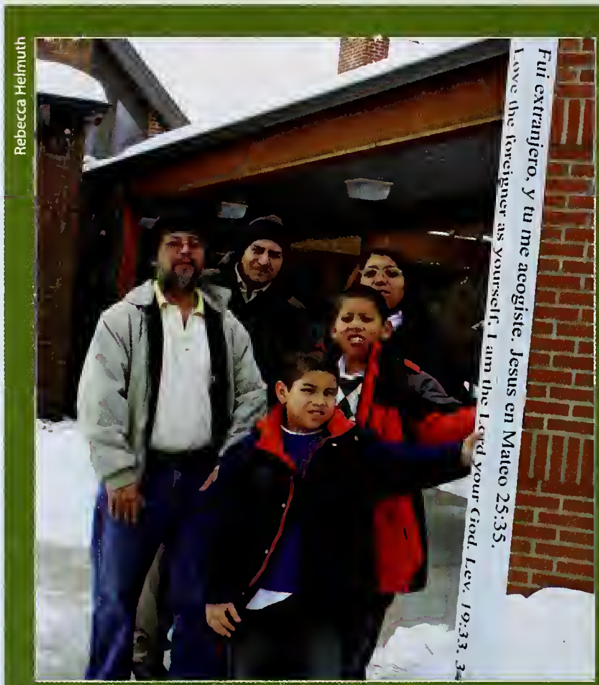
Razia is one MEDA client. She is just 30 years old, but she's already suffered through decades of war and strife. Razia lives in Kabul, Afghanistan, where years of conflict have taken their toll on her family. Earning a livelihood has been extremely difficult. Razia was a skilled tailor but struggled to know how to turn those valuable skills into regular income in order to feed her family.

But everything changed when she heard about microfinance loans offered through MEDA. Razia soon secured a loan and began building her own tailoring business.

"With the loan," she says, "I have been able to forget my sorrows and start to prosper. I repaid my loan on time and applied for a second loan."

Razia also helped her husband purchase a vehicle, allowing him to earn an extra 1,500 Afghanis (equals $40) per day. Slowly their family is increasing its income and rising above poverty.

"I encourage others to get a loan, too," she says, "because the only way to help yourself and your family is to work. "Through MEDA, I have access to the finest resources to help me reach my goals."
—*MEDA*


Rebecca Helmuth
Fui extranjero, y tu me acogiste. Jesus en Mateo 25:35.
Love the foreigner as yourself. I am the Lord your God. Lev. 19:33, 3

Immigration 'solidarity pole' planted at church

Following a Sunday school series on immigration, Francisco Berdejo (back) and the Ramirez family of North Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church touch a "solidarity pole." The pole, inscribed with "welcoming the stranger" Bible verses in Spanish and English, was dedicated during a Jan. 25 worship service. Situated in a largely Latino neighborhood, North Goshen planted the solidarity pole as a visual symbol of its commitment to "the stranger among us."—*Rebecca Helmuth*

MCC provides supplies to Gaza and more

AKRON, Pa.—Mennonite Central Committee is providing relief to three areas around the world suffering from war and natural disasters:

Gaza: Mennonite Central Committee is preparing to ship blankets and other relief supplies to the Gaza Strip despite Israeli restrictions on humanitarian aid to the war-torn region. Israel is preventing most humanitarian aid from entering Gaza in the aftermath of a 23-day war against Palestinian militants, according to Daryl Byler, an MCC regional representative for Jordan, Iran, Iraq and Palestine. Byler is optimistic that MCC's shipment of 3,910 blankets and 1,260 relief kits will be allowed into Gaza when it arrives this month.

Honduras: MCC provided blankets, food and kits in Honduras through a partner agency following devastating floods in October and November 2008. More than 313,000 people were affected by the destruction. Proyecto Aldea Global, an MCC partner, quickly responded by providing 4,000 comforters, 7,900 cans of meat, 1,085 health kits and 707 school kits from MCC.

Colombia: Mennonite Brethren churches in the Choco region of Colombia provide alternative agricultural projects for families in the "Food not Coca" program. The program, funded by MCC, supports the efforts of more than 100 families. Coca cultivation has changed the economy by inflating local prices. Traditional crop prices do not sustain farmer's families. Coca, when processed illegally, produces cocaine, which is a sure income.

"There is definitely a temptation to grow coca, especially in rural communities," says Manuel Mosquera, pastor of the Istmina Mennonite Brethren Church and coordinator of "Food not Coca."

Additionally, people were forced to abandon their land in the early months of 2008 because of fighting between illegal paramilitary groups in the Choco province of Colombia. A large number of the displaced families were members of Mennonite Brethren churches from the towns of Basuro and Baudó. MCC sent $7,500 to the Mennonite Brethren Church in Istmina to help them respond with emergency food provision.—*MCC*

Sarah Harder

photographers enter first photo contest

e first-ever photo contest sponsored by *The Mennonite* drew photographers for the five categories available. Sarah Harder n the "Mennonite Church USA Members at Work, Service or y" category with this shot of Eastern Mennonite University dents on camels in the Sahara Desert in 2008.

Lehman, veteran EMU education prof, dies

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Esther K. Lehman, 85, a retired longtime member of the education department faculty at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, died Jan. 30. Lehman, professor emerita of education, joined the EMU faculty in 1951 and retired in 1982. She was a reading and language arts specialist in the education department. Lehman took an assignment with Mennonite Central Committee, 1982-85, working at the Teacher Training College in Serowe, Botswana. She graduated from EMU in 1949 and received a master's degree from George Peabody College, Nashville, Tenn., a master's degree in Christian education from Wheaton (Ill.) College and a doctorate in education from Syracuse (N.Y.) University. Lehman was a member of Mt. Clinton Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg.—*EMU*

Icy challenge benefits Spruce Lake Retreat

CANADENSIS, Pa.—This year's "polar plunge" at the men's retreat at Spruce Lake Retreat, Canadensis, raised $10,000 to benefit Spruce Lake on Jan. 9. It all started with board chair Robert Nice posing a dare. If the men would raise $1,000 for Spruce Lake, executive director Mark Swartley would do the "polar plunge"—diving into the icy water of Spruce Lake. Before long, the amount pledged tipped over $5,000. Director of development Mark Fly, wilderness camp director Kent Kauffman, retreat center director Tim Hillegas and adult and family ministries director Eric Horst jumped in Jan. 9 with air temperatures in the 20s. —*Spruce Lake Retreat*

Mennonite Men grants $35,000 to church

NEWTON, Kan.—Mennonite Men sent Rochester (N.Y.) Area Mennonite Fellowship (RAMF) a $35,000 JoinHands church-building grant in January. Mennonite Men coordinator Jim Gingerich visited the congregation last September and symbolically presented the grant.

RAMF organized gradually, first around 1980 as a group that met Sunday afternoons. It began meeting Sunday mornings in the first of a series of rented spaces in 1986.

Early on the congregation joined New York Mennonite Conference, and in 1992 it joined the General Conference Mennonite Church. The congregation has about 60 members.

Construction of the 3,800-square-foot building has been completed with much volunteer help. The property, once a farm, is RAMF's first permanent home—a $500,000 project toward which the congregation and even former members have donated generously.

The JoinHands church-building program enlists members who commit themselves to contribute $100 twice each year to support new congregations. Members may be individuals or groups such as Sunday school classes or men's fellowships.

JoinHands has given about $1.5 million to more than 50 congregations since 1984.—*Gordon Houser*

Miller lead conference minister for IN-MI

GOSHEN, Ind.—Daniel Z. Miller began his role as Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference lead conference minister on Jan. 26. His appointment comes in the midst of a time of transition.

Daniel Miller

Leaders across the conference are working at understanding and engaging new ways of thinking and working as they follow God's leading, prompted by a listening-redesign process that began four years ago.

Miller is the first person to serve in the new position of lead conference minister. The transition team created the position last summer.

In the last 15 years, Miller has served eight congregations in northern Indiana as transitional pastor, walking them through conflict, visioning and preparing for new pastoral leadership.

Timothy Burkholder has served as interim executive conference minister since Sherm Kauffman completed his ministry with the conference in December 2007.—*Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference*

—*compiled by Anna Groff*

IN BRIEF

Longhurst is MPN marketing director

John Longhurst will begin as director of marketing and sales for Mennonite Publishing Network May 1 and will be based in Winnipeg. Longhurst has more than 25 years experience in communications and marketing for nonprofit organizations and educational institutions and currently is director of communications and marketing for Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. —*Mennonite Publishing Network*

Water by numbers

- Global average gallons of water used each year to produce goods and services, per capita: 328,366
- Annual per capita water use in the United States: 655,939
- Annual per capita water use in China: 185,449
- Number of people worldwide who do not have access to fresh water: 1.2 billion
- Number of children who die each year for lack of access to clean water and adequate sanitation: almost 2 million

—*Yes! magazine*

Roadside Jesus

by Isaac Villegas

We encounter Jesus when we welcome strangers.

Tears flow freely this week. Fatback died a few days ago. Liver failure. Caroline gathers us into a circle around the plastic folding table. Hand in hand—some more filthy than others. Heads bowed and eyes closed. "Heavenly Father," she prays, "your people are hurting." She finishes with the Lord's Prayer, and we all join in: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread." Since I'm new to this circle, I follow the lead of the guy whose hand I just held. Sparky piles spaghetti on his plate and grabs a roll. This week a Presbyterian church provides our daily bread. As we sit around the table, I overhear bits and pieces of conversations: a broken rib, a robbery, chiggers, harassment from Chapel Hill police, Bulldog in the hospital, no more food stamps, hitching a ride to Montana. Noise from the speeding cars drowns out the words in between.

The people who gather at Wednesday's Open Table haunt my celebration of Sunday's Lord's Table.

Photo supplied

The writer reads Scripture at the Open Table gathering in Chapel Hill, N.C.

Every Wednesday at noon, Communion happens on the service road next to highway 15/501 between Durham and Chapel Hill, N.C. A few people drive up in cars as I did; the rest wander out from the forests, where they live in tents. They call this time of fellowship "the open table." Sparky, one of the regulars, calls it "God's little flock."

Sparky, Caroline and the others let me stop by and eat at their table. Every meal is an education. They've taken away my grand solutions for homelessness and instead have given me their names and faces and stories. Now when I sit at church on Sundays, my mind conjures up their faces, and I notice their absence. The people who gather at Wednesday's Open Table haunt my celebration of Sunday's Lord's Table.

As I travel between these two tables, I can't help but ask, What does our worship of Jesus Christ in all his glory have to do with the humiliated and shamed? This tension runs through the heart of the Epistle to the Hebrews. When I turn to those pages of Scripture, my images of glory and humiliation are confounded and flow into one another. Hebrews offers a description of Jesus that entangles glory and humiliation into a single knot that cannot be undone: Jesus is humiliated glory, glorified humiliation. Chapter 2 sets us on a wandering path to the face of Christ: "We do see Jesus," the author says in verse 9. When we see him at the end of Hebrews, we find ourselves at the edge of town among the humiliated: "Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured" (13:13).

The text speaks of the crucified Jesus in the present tense: "Let us then go to him." Are we to believe that Jesus is there right now, as we sit and read these words? Is Christ among those who share his suffering and disgrace and abuse? The lead singer for U2 offered a stunning answer to these questions. In February 2006, Bono preached a sermon to president George W. Bush and his friends. His words reverberate with the thought of Hebrews: "God is in the slums, in the cardboard boxes where the poor play house. God is in the silence of a mother who has infected her child with a virus that will end both their lives. God is in the cries heard under the rubble of war. God is in the debris of wasted opportunity and lives, and God is with us if we are with them."

When Hebrews tells us to fix our eyes and center our lives on Jesus, we are destabilized. As we follow after Jesus, we give up control of our direction. We begin to lose ourselves in the wastelands, like those places Bono describes. The lure of Christ's gracious presence invites us onto a wandering path of discipleship that leads into forgotten places—the margins of highways and the wilderness of slums. As the title of Ernst Käsemann's landmark book on Hebrews puts it, we become *The Wandering People of God*. We are nomads who set up our tents where others don't want to live. We wander into relationships where we share burdens and hope to encounter the living presence of Jesus among the disfigured, disordered and disheveled. "Can we see Jesus?" The answer depends on where we go and with whom we await Christ's presence.

The nomadic vision of Hebrews adds a critical edge to our talk about mission. Certain kinds of missional spirituality turn Jesus into a possession, a thing we can own. We can put him in our pocket or tuck him away in our hearts for safekeeping. We treat Jesus as a deposit in our spiritual bank accounts, a fund we can draw from later, when we need it, and lend to others if we feel generous.

Descriptions of the missional church fall into the same temptation. We talk as if we own Jesus: since we have God's presence, we must transform our churches into missional communities that share what we already possess. Thus giving only goes in one direction: Jesus is ours to give away. We own the patent on God's presence; the church owns the exclusive rights of Jesus.

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

But Phil Kniss, pastor of Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg Va., describes a different missional encounter, one that resonates with Hebrews. In a sermon on Feb. 4, 2007, Kniss said that a missional church wanders into the world and "asks what God is up to around here." Through wandering, this church "lets go of itself," surrenders agenda and strategies and cultivates virtues of receptivity. This is a church that "listens and looks" because "the reign of God is trying to be born somewhere." Therefore "we go [into the world] as willing to receive as to give."

Kniss envisions a missional church that is "as willing to receive as to give." Hospitality is the name of this posture. We are nomads with open hands, ready to receive someone else's lead because with her hand comes Christ's body. We wander beyond the walls of our community because Jesus is there, calling out to us, awaiting reception. That's why the author of Hebrews closes by telling the church to welcome the stranger: "Do not neglect caring for strangers, for through this some have cared for messengers without knowing" (13:2).

We are nomads with open hands, ready to receive someone else's lead because with her hand comes Christ's body.

With this verse the author of Hebrews reminds us of the story of Abraham and Sarah. They show hospitality to three messengers who turn out to be the Lord: "The Lord appeared to Abraham … as he sat at the entrance of his tent … Abraham looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent to meet them and bowed down to the ground" (Genesis 18:1-2). Strangers turn out to be the Lord. Who would expect God to show up as a few homeless travelers?

We are far too comfortable with a fleshless Jesus. We suffer from Gnostic sensibilities that deceive us into thinking we can separate spirits from bodies. But Genesis 18 tells us that our God appeared as three strangers—real people, flesh and blood. Sure, welcoming strangers may be a form of generosity. Yet the author of Hebrews shows how hospitality is also our way of receiving God's presence—some have welcomed God without knowing it. The messenger of God, the Lord, comes to us through strangers and foreigners. They are God's missions to save us from ourselves. Will we serve them as Abraham and Sarah shared a meal with the Lord? Can we consider how foreigners may be God in our midst, divine messengers who bring the word from God?

Photo supplied

With Hebrews as our wilderness guide, our churches will become missional when we learn to welcome strangers, prisoners and the mistreated as agents of God's call. Our task is to open ourselves to receive what they can give: their very presence, which may turn out to be our Lord. In his forthcoming book *To See History Doxologically*, Alex Sider of Bluffton (Ohio) University puts it this way: "For the author of Hebrews, [the gospel] is continually given as an ecstatic mission that takes the shape of mutual love and hospitality." We wander into the good news of Christ's presence when our mission of love takes us into unfamiliar places where we can share a stranger's burdens. Mutual love and hospitality is how we receive Jesus into our lives.

The gospel is an ecstatic mission, writes Sider, where we give and receive the good news as God guides us into relationships where we share burdens and learn to love one another. Discipleship is our unceasing struggle to welcome the good news of God's love for the world into our lives. Thus discipleship is also hospitality; it is how we make room in our lives for Christ's redemption. And according to Hebrews, we make room for Jesus when we welcome suffering strangers and wandering foreigners. They are the messengers of God for our redemption. They have much to give if we are willing to receive the gifts of their presence. Will we receive them as God's mission to save us from ourselves?

If our American churches want a future, we need to wander into the places everyone else abandons. That's where we belong—on the margins. Our people are the ones who look like Jesus, suffering in cardboard boxes, under the rubble of war, among the debris. Our people are the ones everyone else has cast out, the unclean, the abandoned, the strange.

"Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (13:13-14). Hebrews tells us that home is elsewhere. I join the strangers on Wednesday during my lunch hour because I'm homeless, too, or at least I need to learn what it means to be homeless. They are my teachers; I am a disciple with much to learn, much to receive. Hebrews tells me that Jesus is out there on the side of the road. I can't say that I recognize him. That's why I'll go again. Maybe it takes time to see such mysteries.

For now I'll let a question guide me as I wander: If I pray "thy kingdom come" with them every week, will I discover that the coming kingdom is already at hand? For the kingdom happens at the table when we break bread and bear each other's burdens. And if that's the case, this kingdom is not something I possess. It's not a kingdom I can build if I work hard enough. Rather, it's an episodic kingdom that happens whether I'm there or not. I can receive it only if I return to their foldup table next week and take my seat and patiently await another advent of God's presence.

"But we do see Jesus." Maybe he will come when I sit and pray and eat on the margins of highway 15/501. Hopefully I'll recognize him this time. All I can do is hope.

Isaac Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship.

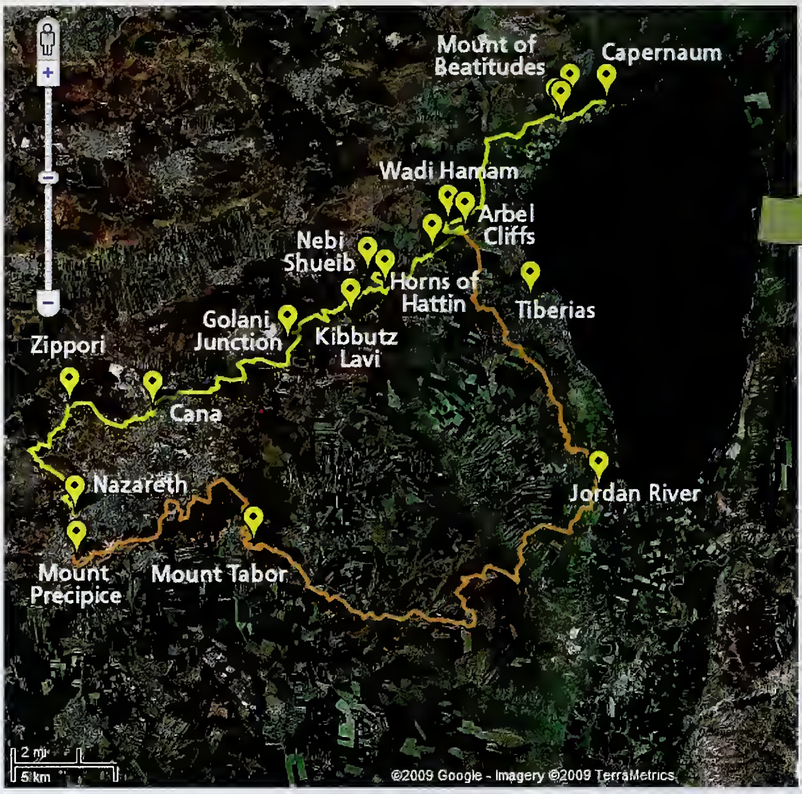
The gleaners of Oakley

by Joel Miller

The laws of Moses,
ancient as stone,
command the one
harvesting a field
to leave behind the edges, the corners, the extras, the leftovers.
The scraps—at least the scraps—are for the poor and the sojourner.
Early Wednesday mornings, outside my bedroom window,
well before the recycling truck rumbles through the neighborhood,
I hear the gleaners of Oakley,
foraging through the fields of green bins that line the street.
Curbside scraps and leftovers.
A harvest of aluminum
will become
their daily bread.

Joel Miller is pastor of Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship.

Photo illustration | Dee Birkey



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Jesus

by David Landis

I studied in the Middle East with Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., during the fall semester of my junior year, and this period of international learning altered the course of my life. My experiences abroad initiated misgivings about going into medicine after graduation, I began a period of global travel to explore possibilities. In the following year, I visited more than 40 countries, including a trip back to Israel/Palestine to visit friends and spend a month hiking the Israel National Trail, a 950-kilometer hiking route traversing the length of the country.

While I was scouring the Internet for information on the Israel National Trail, I came across only one site in English—the blog of a young Israeli hiker named Maoz Inon who chronicled his personal month-long journey with detail and enthusiasm. On a whim, I emailed Maoz with a few questions about practical hiking. His response resounded with exuberant hospitality, "You can stay at my house and use my maps. I'll bring you water in the desert."

www.sxc.hu

When I returned to Israel the following spring, we hiked together during the peak of the green burst that follows winter rains, when the fields are teeming with red poppies. We passed through Maoz's family's moshav, located just north of the border of the Gaza Strip. He told me stories of how his family used to take their bikes into Gaza City before the conflict escalated. He joked about how they were so close to the border with Gaza that when rockets were fired they went right over his family's house. Maoz spoke with an awareness of the suffering of his neighbors yet exuded a warmth and persistence that moved forward with hope.

Maoz had recently completed his second around-the-world trip and was exploring opportunities to build peace in his own country. He wanted to start a backpacker-style guesthouse in an Arab city in Israel and use tourism with the development of hiking routes to bridge the gap between Jews and Arabs. He imagined Israeli Jews walking into an Arab market for the first time, experiencing a Palestinian hospitality that smells like syrup-laden ktayyef and knaffe, hot mint and sage tea, freshly ground coffee and cardamon.

I continued on my journey but stayed connected to the development of Maoz's dream. Within a few months, the Fauzi Azar Inn was up and running in the winding old city streets of Nazareth, the largest Arab city in Israel. The inn is located in a historic Arab mansion with marble floors from Turkey, roof tiles from France and beautiful 200-year-old hand-painted ceilings by a Lebanese artist. The Azar family owns the house, and Maoz's relationship with them has bridged the gap to bring many Jewish tourists into the old city. He loves to tell the story of how Israeli jaws drop as they learn of the rich Palestinian culture and history that has resided in Nazareth for generations.

Maoz loves to tell the story of how Israeli jaws drop as they learn of the rich Palestinian culture and history that has resided in Nazareth for generations.

trail

Walking where Jesus walked helps put us in touch with his life and teachings.

Since the fall of 2007, I've been living in Nazareth and helping out at the Fauzi Azar Inn. Maoz and I have founded the Jesus Trail, a 65-kilometer hiking route from Nazareth to Capernaum that connects major sites in Jesus' life, including the Mount of Beatitudes, Tiberias, Mount Tabor, Cana and the Sea of Galilee. Our vision is for the Jesus Trail to become a world-class route that provides a way to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and learn about his life and teachings. We hope it will bring people together from different nationalities, cultures and religions.

During the past months in Nazareth, I have had many conversations with travelers, hikers, students and the press relating to Jesus' itinerant lifestyle. Everyone is curious about the Jesus that existed before Christianity, asking, "What can we learn from the Jesus who walked between villages, encountered a diversity of people, and invited them on a journey that promises abundant life?"

How did Jesus travel during his life?

Matthew 9:35 states that Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom. In Mark 6:7-12, Jesus sends his disciples out on foot in pairs, instructing them to take nothing for the journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. He asks them to travel light, rely on the hospitality of a diversity of neighbors and spread the good news throughout the land.

Since Jesus and his followers were not wealthy Roman diplomats or military leaders but mostly a band of low-class fishermen and subsistence farmers, we can assume they traveled by foot. Walking between the towns listed in Scripture required Jesus and his followers to pass months of their time hiking through fields and valleys, up mountains and cliffs and through risky areas of political instability. The range of Jesus' travels as an adult extends at least 50 miles east to west and 150 miles north to south through present-day Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Wikimedia Commons | David Shankbone

The range of Jesus' travels as an adult extends at least 50 miles east to west and 150 miles north to south through present-day Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Jesus and his disciples' diet likely would have consisted of bread and olive oil supplemented with local fruits and vegetables. A staff was used for protection against wild animals and thieves, which lurked in rugged hill country and in border regions where authority and security were tenuous. It is unlikely they carried much money, though some of the finances of Jesus' itinerant ministry were funded by Joanna, wife of Herod Antipas' finance minister, as well as several other women who were from Sepphoris (Luke 8:3).

What realities affected travel and movement during Jesus lifetime?

Matthew 4:12-16 states that Jesus went to live in the Capernaum region, near the Jordan River on "the way to the sea." This ancient land route is called the Via Maris, connecting eastward to Damascus and serving as one of the major thoroughfares through first-century Palestine between the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. The Via Maris connected the silk and incense routes that extended from Iran and China to the ports of Ptolemais (Acco) and Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast of western Asia.

Jesus was born during the period of the Roman Empire's expansion throughout the Mediterranean

The choice to follow Jesus is to transform life into a journey, take nothing for the road and walk with a trust in providence.

Continued from page 13

region, creating a network of land and sea routes used for transportation and communication. The Roman Road system was comprised of a network of over 63,000 miles of paved roads, connecting centers of government, culture and power stretching from present-day Spain to Iran.

In the first century, less than four miles from the small village of Nazareth (population 200-400) was Sepphoris, one of Herod Antipas' capitals. This city boasted a population of 30,000 and was a center for culture and art in the Galilee, including beautiful mosaics and a Roman theater, giving it the reputation as the ornament of the Galilee. It also served as the political and banking capital of the region, housing many of the social and religious elite. Although Scripture does not mention Sepphoris by name, it is likely Jesus was aware of its existence, as a "city on a hill cannot be hidden" and is visible from the ridges of Nazareth. Proximity to Sepphoris would have provided Jesus employment with his father Joseph, exposure to foreigners from across the Roman world as well as the ability to learn to speak and read three languages: Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic. Through archaeological evidence of cities and systems of international transport during Jesus' life and informed speculation when interfaced with Scripture, we can know that Jesus was in contact with the broader world.

Why might Jesus have chosen to travel?

Jesus' choice to spend much of his adult life in a state of itineracy provides hope to the destitute. For the poor and oppressed, Jesus' way of living offered an invitation to choose freedom from oppressive and unjust structures—to consider them insignificant compared with the promised good news. As the movement grew, Jesus' choice to build a kingdom with decentralized geography consequentially disempowered elite establishments that hoarded wealth and exerted control through segregation. Whether Jesus' intentions were to challenge political and religious structures or not, it is clear his movement threatened the authorities enough to publicly execute him.

The geography of the kingdom of God is not tied to specific places or people but is an invitation open to all. In Jesus' central region of Capernaum, he was in contact with a diversity of ethnic and religious groups, making it possible to imagine the beauty of a world without borders, restriction of movement or division. His vision for the kingdom of God is an invitation to mindfully journey in a way that is life-giving for all people.

What does this mean for followers of Jesus today and the Christian movement worldwide?

It is wise to be located in a region of international influence, demography and movement.

In order to communicate with the world, there is a need to be located in a region with exposure to the world's diversity. Today, these places are best represented as urban and border regions, near airports and seaports and along major travel routes. Encountering diverse demography through everyday existence is the foundation to building relationships and bridges across people groups.

The geography of the kingdom of God has no political, ethnic or religious borders.

Jesus' vision and philosophy of land was focused on following his example of breaking down obstructions to movement and seeking reconciliatory relationships between diverse people groups. The choice to follow his example was a decision to recognize each person as a neighbor and extending love even to enemies. This also means extending relationships beyond traditional identities, whether national, political, ethnic, religious or denominational and focusing on the individual behind their public label.

The choice to follow Jesus is to transform life into a journey, take nothing for the road and walk with a trust in providence.

As paths are made by walking, the choice to take Jesus seriously becomes real when movement begins. This journey is sustained by simple living, intentionality, the practice of hospitality and creative ingenuity. It becomes unending as the traveler rests in the risk of action, grasping the reality that the exercise of faith is the true adventure of the journey.

The Jesus Trail and Fauzi Azar Inn continue to support the local communities nearby, inspiring many neighbors to start businesses because of the increasing interest and traffic. Our work is a combined effort of locals and internationals, Muslims, Christians and Jews. As we focus on providing hospitality for travelers passing through the land, our different ethnic and religious backgrounds become less important than our attention to others. We mostly encourage people on their journeys, whether physical or spiritual, offering them an opportunity to spend some time on the path of Jesus and experience abundant life.

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Preventing homelessness before it starts

Friends in need

www.sxc.hu

by Jan Johnson

Carol could never catch up financially. Before she could pay for rent, food and child care, her purse was empty. As we became friends, I often found her staring into an empty refrigerator and crying over her broken marriage. Although she was a teacher, she didn't manage money well and was too devastated by her divorce to care.

She taught summer school, but when it was over in July, she couldn't find a temporary job that coordinated with child care and bus schedules.

I tried to help. I paid her to watch my children. I brought her food. I encouraged her to study for a state teaching credential test so she could get a job in a higher-paying public school. Beyond that, I was stumped. Then I read in the newspaper that single-parent families were the fastest-growing category among the homeless, and I realized Carol and her children were likely candidates. There are at least a half million homeless children today; some statistics suggest up to a million. How could I be concerned enough to write a check to a downtown mission but not enough to recognize a friend who soon could become a resident there? I had stereotyped the down-and-out person as someone living on Skid Row, but that's not so.

Typical scenarios leading to homelessness include a family that can't find affordable housing after its older building is torn down and a waitress goes on medical leave and can't survive on sick pay without tips.

My friend Marguerite didn't understand how desperate her neighbors were until someone bought their house at a foreclosure auction. "I remember the husband lost his job, but I never dreamed it was that bad," she said.

The problem of homelessness can be so overwhelming we think only specialized organizations are equipped to deal with it. But a friend who works at Union Rescue Mission in Los Angeles told me she believes the church is the highway around Skid Row. "It's that committed network of people who already know potentially homeless people who can help the most—before they get down here." Here are some suggestions on how we can help:

Be a resource person. People with financial problems can get so discouraged that they aren't good at digging up job training programs or subsidized child care. We can make some phone calls and search the Internet.

Ask friends if they know someone who's selling a reliable used car or who rents inexpensive apartments. They may know about employers who offer child care, such as universities and hospitals. A needy person may not qualify for a professional job, but clerical and custodial help may be needed.

Ask potentially homeless friends to rethink their family options. Can an aunt or in-law move in and trade room and board for child care? Many times people in this situation are estranged from family members who would help if they knew there was a problem. Probe to see if they could patch things up with their families.

People who work regularly with the homeless can direct us to resources. Some churches publish their own classified ads or bulletin boards that feature used furniture, jobs and quality day care.

Here are some other ways you can bring hope to those feeling discouraged by their situation:

Be a friend. View this person as a peer instead of a "needy person." On Carol's birthday, my husband watched her children while I took her out for cheesecake. "I feel so special," she whispered.

Validate them. Lack of self-esteem is a major problem. One way we can help is to point out this needy person's good qualities. When I admired Carol's tall, slim figure in her class picture, she looked shocked. Between the breakup of her marriage and her self doubts, she'd forgotten that anyone could think she was attractive.

Don't expect miracles. Understand that some days a potentially homeless person may want to work on problems and other days feel hopeless. Carol studied for her credential test sporadically. I learned to praise her for her confident moments and walk with her through the discouraging ones.

Find support. A family's personal and medical problems may be more than you can handle. Shelters and self-help groups for alcoholics, spouses of alcoholics and battered women are often listed in the telephone book. Some missions offer free clinics. Some churches offer free counseling.

Share your faith. Since Carol already knew the Lord, I tried to remind her that God loved her without giving her pat answers.

Helping others doesn't have to drain you; it can help you. After talking to Carol about how God always provides, I received a car insurance bill that had doubled. "We can never pay this," I stormed. I rehearsed my words on myself.

How could I be concerned enough to write a check to a downtown mission but not enough to recognize a friend who soon could become a resident there?

Jan Johnson is a retreat speaker and author of Growing Compassionate Kids *and* Enjoying the Presence of God.

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Communion

Communion and mission can go together.

by Eleanor Kreider

Early Christian tradition, not New Testament teaching, tied baptism and Communion together. In the first few centuries after the apostles a dramatic baptismal rite of entry into a bounded Christian community prepared the path to the weekly Eucharistic table of nourishment and joy in the presence of the Risen Christ. Enforced universal baptism eventually distorted both baptism and Communion. As western Christians we have inherited a complicated history of the church's treasured forms of worship. Today, Mennonites rightly look to the Communion service as a proper center and source for our calling to build community, to follow Christ in discipleship and to foster justice and reconciliation.

Does our Communion express God's character and concerns?

Does our Communion express God's character and concerns? What does it mean that Christ is present when we gather at his table? How does the Spirit energize us for self-giving love and service as we go out? A Trinitarian approach addresses some of our questions. In this service we "praise God the Abba bearing love, praise God the servant from above, praise God the Paraclete we share" (Gail Ramshaw-Schmidt, "Naming the Trinity: Orthodoxy and Inclusivity," *Worship*, November 1986).

We respond to God the Abba bearing love

Like the sun with the sunflower, Abba God turns to us in our worship, and we turn our faces to Abba. In Communion the story of God's whole saving action comes first. Listening to this story is like feeling the warm sun on our faces. Turning toward the warmth, we respond. First we hear the sweep of the great story, then our praise and thanksgiving flow.

Is worship only what we do? We plan Communion, lead it, experience it, either like or dislike it. It is more. It is gift. But in this gift of worship do we actually receive mercy, forgiveness and grace? Abba God calls out to us, "Come to me. You are my beloved people. Listen to my great passion. Join me as I work to restore the whole creation into wholeness and peace." With joy and commitment we respond, "Yes." Both our worship and the call into God's mission are gift. God initiates mission and worship, and each flows through the other. Nourished at the table, we become co-workers in God's great mission of reconciliation, justice, healing and hope.

We respond to God the servant from above

Communion is not an abstraction, not a performance, not a beautiful event to induce peaceful feelings, not a tradition to maintain. Communion is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, the servant from above. He is the one who loves us, saves us, serves us and calls us into fullness of life.

In the Communion service he says, "See my hands. See my side." He says, "Come to me, you who are troubled and weary. Your sins are forgiven." He says, "Love one another as I have loved you. Pray for your enemies."

Here at the Lord's Table is mercy, forgiveness and grace offered for all in the very person of Jesus Christ. We eat the bread of Jesus' life and drink the cup of his sacrifice. In the dialogue of adoration we respond with fervor and joy, then turn to receive each other with open hearts. We "welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed [us], for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7). The harmony of this welcome is not to please ourselves but to build each other up so that glory will come to God. Worship and welcome are God's gifts to the church. In Communion we pledge love to Christ and one another, sealing it in shared bread and wine. "We who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

We respond to God the Paraclete we share

How are we to join in God's universal welcome and mission? Only through the Spirit of God, who comes alongside us (paraclete) to comfort, prepare and strengthen us. As we pray at the table, God the Paraclete, works through our ritual actions, enabling us to participate in a fruitful way. It is more than ordinary eating and drinking. Taking into ourselves the bread and wine—gifts of Christ's very life—we present ourselves to be transformed. Communion is a type of commissioning, a call to

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questions

extend outward the welcome and love we have received. The loving energy of the Spirit transforms us as individuals and as a community. How do we respond to the Spirit in Communion? By committing ourselves to self-giving love in the service of brother, sister, neighbor and enemy.

Communion, with its intense focus on the presence of Christ, calls us in the power of the Spirit into the mission of God. The Spirit shapes individual believers and the congregation into Christlike people who will join in God's mission of reconciliation. We will breathe mercy, offer forgiveness, pray for the enemy, love the neighbor and welcome the stranger. In Communion we act out the Lord's Prayer as we receive bread and forgiveness from Abba's hand, then offer bread and forgiveness to others, hallow God's name, and pray for the coming of the kingdom.

In light of this cosmic context, we realize the questions we ask about Communion may be too small. Each question we ask becomes a bigger question.

- Who can we invite to the Communion Table? becomes bigger: Does the quality of Christ's welcome we experience in Communion permeate our everyday relationships?
- What kind of bread shall we use and what size of cup? becomes bigger: Does the generosity of God's provision spill over into passionate local and global sharing?
- How do we do the peace greeting? becomes bigger: Does the love and peace within the church extend outward to self-giving love of neighbor and enemy?
- How do I keep from offending my sister who frets that we sing the wrong songs at Communion? becomes bigger: How can we invite outsiders into a common song of joy and glory to God?
- How could we even think of offering Communion to an unbaptized person? becomes bigger: Might we be more flexible, offering different kinds of Communion in the round of church life, becoming a community of many tables?

Five modest proposals

1. A church could hold two kinds of Communion services—public and closed. Public services, generally on Sunday mornings, begin with an open invitation and draw on themes of meals from Jesus' ministry. Communion in this case may be a route to baptism. Closed services, for baptized Christians only, emphasize the disciplines and mutual love of covenanted believers. These services, held on a weekday evening, would not be advertised, and may include footwashing and more extensive intercessory prayers.

2. If a church holds to the classic invitation for a Sunday Communion open to baptized Christians only, it could always extend a winsome invitation to baptismal faith. Perhaps a forthrightly open invitation to baptism is more hospitable than offering an open invitation to the Communion table. Are we more willing to welcome than to invite?

Are we more willing to welcome than to invite?

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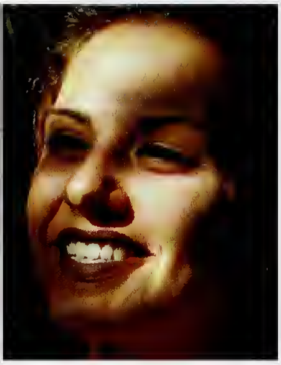
3. A church may consider all its meals Eucharistic meals. Potlucks, soup kitchen meals, small group snacks—all may begin with simple ritual words, for example: "Christ is our host. His life is our bread and our drink. Let us take this food with thanksgiving and joy." This is not exactly Communion, but it resonates with Communion prayers and is a legitimate extension of them.

4. A church may separate the bread and the cup. The invitation to share bread would be for everyone: "This is the bread for the world, the bread of life. Jesus invites us all. Everyone can share." The invitation to the cup would be for those who have committed their lives to Christ and his way (Matthew 20:22): "This is the cup of discipleship. Those who are willing to walk with Christ, drink his cup and receive baptism will participate." Here is a way to combine an open invitation in the same service with an invitation even more intense than usual to Jesus' costly cup of baptism and life-giving service.

5. In Communion we rightly celebrate the joy of the resurrection. But Communion holds all the themes of redemption together: Christ's life, suffering, death, vindication, presence in his Spirit and his coming again. In Communion, as in the rest of our lives as Christians, we will "know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). It is uniquely in Communion that this whole story holds together. And this story, told and enacted in Communion, is still the greatest "draw" to faith. Communion is a table of mission.

Eleanor Kreider teaches at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

A biblical consideration for adoption



C. Richie is in the Master of Divinity program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Mass.

As the population continues to rise, people ask, How does God want me to care for children? This does not imply that God wants all people to be parents or schoolteachers but draws upon the biblical model of adoption and care for orphans. Although the Bible clearly demonstrates the responsibility of both the mother and the father in bringing up the child, concern for the disenfranchised is certainly a theme in the Bible.

Our mandate, given by Jesus Christ under the new covenant, is to care for the orphaned. He advocated letting the children come to him when the disciples wanted to dismiss them. He had great concern for these children, who were precious in his sight, regardless of their ethnicity, gender or capabilities. Yet there are many children, globally and nationally, who are without mother and father or, worse yet, on the streets fending for themselves.

Why should some children be brought into existence when there are many loving, beautiful children who need homes immediately?

There are 11-year-old girls on the streets of the world prostituting themselves; doing despicable acts one's wife would not do, just to have money to feed themselves. In India, parents intentionally mutilate the bodies of their children so they can panhandle on the streets. Young boys steal and rob for food or allow themselves to be violated by perverse men for money.

In this country as well are children who desperately need homes. They are given up by young women who accidentally or forcefully get pregnant. There are even more school-age children whose parents do not emotionally take care of them. Yet all these at-risk children who could be adopted are deemed unwanted because they are "too old," not of European descent or because potential adoptive parents worry about the orphaned child not looking like one of their own. They are disregarded as unlovable because of circumstances they cannot control. Many children wait for parents to adopt them, but as they get older, their chances of being adopted diminish, and so does their hope.

The facts of displaced children and the sheer amount of couples that want children are undeniable. However, there is a solution both to the ache of the orphan's abandonment and the desire of couples to have children. Christians have an obligation to form their ethics and actions after what the Bible instructs. The Scriptures paint a picture of selflessness and generosity, not just as a suggestion but also as a way of life. Perhaps the most vivid image of these two virtues comes in the concept of adoption.

The Scriptures certainly speak of adoption, but adoption is used in the Bible in reference to God adopting us. We were unwanted and sinful; God took us in, sanctifying us and giving us life eternal. God not only adopted us but did it by sacrificing his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. It was through giving up his own Son that we can be called sons and daughters of the Father.

In the same way, through the relinquishing of the ability to have biological children, more children can be adopted as sons and daughters and saved from a life of a hell on earth. How much love a child can feel when parents come and pick them out of a life of destitution! Then with the life example of adoption, the parents can explain how God adopted them into his family.

The question before us is, How can we continue to procreate wantonly when we know there are many children of equal dignity and worth with a life full of pain, abandoned by their parents who did not want them? The Lord Jesus welcomed children to sit on his lap while he blessed them, and he would not have turned a blind eye to the abandoned child.

Why should some children be brought into existence when there are many loving, beautiful children who need homes immediately? Let us remember the words from James, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans" (1:27). This pure action will glorify the Almighty God more than a thousand live births. TM

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Stories of pastors in need of health insurance**
—Madelyn Metzger

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of *The Mennonite*, the board for The Mennonite, Inc., or Mennonite Church USA.

What do the church and schools want?

Greg Boyd tells Mennonite leaders 'Mennonite culture' is not the treasure.

James Rosenberger, Mennonite Education Agency board chair, speaks during a question-and-answer time with Greg Boyd, keynote speaker.

Greg Boyd, pastor of Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minn., says Mennonites have a precious treasure to offer in the 21st century. In fact, his evangelical church of 2,000 people is considering becoming a Mennonite church.

However, as the plenary speaker at the Mennonite Education Leaders gathering in Pittsburgh Jan. 30-Feb. 1, Boyd encouraged the group to distinguish "culture" from the kingdom of God.

"Cultures are always changing," he said. "The treasure is not Mennonite culture."

Boyd went on to challenge the leaders to offer up Mennonite culture as "a sort of Isaac to God."

Some 300 board members and administrators attended the gathering—sponsored by Mennonite Education Agency (MEA), Mennonite Schools Council, Mennonite higher education institutions and Mennonite Early Childhood Network—with the theme "Growing as Trees of Righteousness."

Boyd also encouraged the Mennonite education leaders to spend time with intentional groups such as the Simple Way in Philadelphia to learn from other movements.

When asked whether Mennonite schools should be "sectarian," as in the past, or "integrationist," Boyd said to err on the sectarian side and boldly emphasize theological distinctives.

"Be as scandalously flexible with the cultural nonessentials as you are inflexible with kingdom essentials," he said.

In a general session, leaders discussed trends in educational institutions and possible changes.

Bob Bontrager, a consultant from Elkhart, Ind., proposed that Mennonite colleges and universities join forces with the Mennonite Brethren institutions and reduce the number of colleges and seminaries. Bontrager said he sees the "reduction of physical campuses expanding the number of points of contact" and perhaps allowing for presences in major cities.

Greg Boyd

Bontrager's other suggestions for Mennonite institutions included providing dual enrollment with local community institutions and offering online programs. He also suggested MEA shift from its facilitative role and act as a think tank.

In another session, Sarah Flanagan, vice president for U.S. government relations and policy for National Association of Independent College and Universities, described four realities affecting higher education institutions: technology that allows for real communities on the Internet, the increased role of government in higher education, the accountability movement and influence of No Child Left Behind and the decreasing cost to attend public universities.

In other news, Elaine Moyer, principal of Christopher Dock Mennonite School; Bob Rutt, executive director of Penn View Christian School; and Phil Swartley, administrator at Quakertown Christian School, introduced GPS 2012, a collaborative strategic plan initiative between the schools and in partnership with Eastern District and Franconia Mennonite Conference to create a "tri-school community" in Eastern Pennsylvania. —*Anna Groff*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

A conversation between schools and the church

What do schools need from the church?

By Loren Swartzendruber, Eastern Mennonite University president

1. Prayer
2. Names for faculty, staff and board positions
3. Advocacy
4. Accurate information about costs to church members
5. Completion of the Mennonite Education Agency census forms
6. Student aid plans
7. A spirit of love and pride toward Mennonite schools
8. Tolerance

What does the church need from schools?

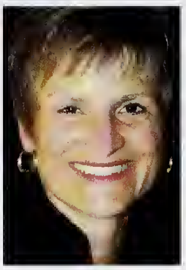
By Sharon Waltner, Mennonite Church USA moderator

1. Know that church is relational and humans crave face-to-face contact.
2. Communicate about spiritual activities on campus to parents.
3. Bring faculty and staff as speakers to our congregations.
4. Remember the powerful effect that staff and faculty have on students.
5. Use Mennonite Church USA identity symbols.
6. Require a course on the "missional paradigm."
7. Encourage all faculty to understand and teach the "missional paradigm," not just the Bible/religion department.—*Anna Groff*

Leaders say church planting on the rise, but 'witness' goal difficult to measure

The gospel of Jesus Christ is practiced and proclaimed through a seamless web of evangelism, justice and peace across the street and around the world." This goal is one of four established by Mennonite Church USA delegates when the denomination was formed in 2001. Anna Groff asked four leaders to assess progress toward our "witness" goal.—*Editor*

Sharon Waltner
Moderator of Mennonite Church USA


Sharon Walnter

Witness is the essence of the Christian walk for all believers, and it's one of four missional priorities Mennonite Church USA is committed to developing and nurturing between now and 2020.

The missional paradigm moves us from a passive "sending" role to a position of empowerment as we are now "being sent." We are making progress, even though we cannot measure it with numbers and charts. Congregations are embracing the idea that the church exists for the world rather than itself. People are learning that attending church is not about "what's in it for me" (WIIFM) but rather, "How can I better learn to worship, witness and serve others?" Our "missionaries" aren't the only ones charged with witness. The rest of us are also called to be evidence of God's kingdom here and now.

Given the choice between orderly control and a dynamic Holy Spirit global movement, I'll take the latter.
—Loren Horst

Congregations and conferences are increasingly committed to mending the gaps between evangelism and peace-justice—both of which are integral to our church's collective witness. Some see these as opposing options, even pitted against each other for emphasis. The Executive Board feels this is a false dichotomy. Has the web of evangelism and peace-justice become seamless? We are making progress, but I fear we still have a few areas needing generous applications of duct tape to hold this web together.

Our Savior said, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:21-22). Witness is not something we delegate to others. It doesn't require degrees, training or skills. It is accepting the empowering call to being sent.

We are not all called to be missionaries in the traditional sense of the word, but we are all sent. I cannot envision a greater example of radical and seamless witness.

Stanley Green
Executive director of Mennonite Mission Network

Stanley Green

Last year when I spoke at a congregation about becoming a missional people, I highlighted the importance of engaging our culture so that we share our witness to Jesus as the source of healing and hope. Afterward an older gentleman told me that he was in his 80s and had been a pastor for most of his life. I steeled myself to hear a critique. Instead, the man whose hand I was shaking asked me to pray for him. With tears flowing down his cheeks, he shared that at one time in his life he cared passionately about engaging people with the gospel but that he had "lost it." His despair was truly frightening.

In my encounters with fellow Mennonites, I try to make sense of the mixed signals. According to some surveys, a quarter of Mennonites report a keen missional consciousness. These encounters with fellow-believers leave me feeling encouraged. However, I meet just as many people who seem to have lost it. They have lost the capacity to share about Jesus and, sadly, do not seem to care about that loss. A few years ago I received a letter from a fellow Mennonite who berated me for believing that we should invite others to encounter Jesus. These encounters leave me saddened and discouraged about the identity and future of Mennonites.

I find hope in encountering some Mennonites, mostly immigrant and newly emergent congregations, who are sincere in their witness. We are a community that encompasses both those with an apathy about having lost our capacity for witness to Jesus and many who share an enthusiasm to be aligned with God's purposes for healing and hope in the world. Churches are dying for lack of witness, and new churches are being planted in many places around the world and across the street in many communities in this country.

Have we made progress? I believe the jury is still out. Will we allow ourselves to tolerate a further erosion of our capacity for witness through accommodation to the relativism in our culture? Alternatively, will we recover our identity as heirs to the Anabaptist tradition marked by such an enthusiasm to share about Jesus that it makes us willing to endure the discomfort of boldly proclaiming Jesus in a culture that has little place for him? In some places we have made great strides in

Note: For the full responses from these leaders, go to www.themennonite.org.

In the East there are 47 new churches and ministries envisioned or in formation, but one key leader reports many of us have lost interest in evangelism.

our interest and capacity to bear witness to Jesus. In other parts of our church we have seen overall declension. The choices we make in our lives and in our local congregations about allowing ourselves to become the "sent ones" will determine our future and answer this question.

Richard Showalter
President of Eastern Mennonite Missions

Richard Showalter

We are farther along than we were six years ago in intent to be a missional church. The "missional church" language is understood and affirmed by more. Professor Patrick Keifert's prophetic word says "the whole church is missional when it is as much 'church sent' as it is 'church gathered.'" Though this has made us less comfortable, we believe that Keifert is right.

There are signs that we are beginning to change our behavior. This past summer, members of West End Mennonite Fellowship of Lancaster, Pa., under the leadership of pastor Josef Berthold, spent time each week interacting with their neighbors on their turf, where we, not they, are most vulnerable. Last year, Elizabethtown district of Lancaster Mennonite Conference distributed free hoagies in a neighboring town. This year, the bishops and credentialed leaders also took "plunges" into our surrounding communities, meeting and blessing those they met. Congregations such as Ephrata, Lititz and Weaverland report exciting developments in outreach to local youth.

Such activities do not in themselves make us any more missional than operating day-care centers, serving new immigrants, reaching out to prisoners, giving to AIDS victims, working for peace and justice or going to Thailand to work in community development—more common ventures among us. However, they indicate a vector, intentionally moving beyond our church walls in new ways with kingdom purpose.

Yet the overarching challenges are not small. With membership standing now at about 16,000, Mennonite Church USA's largest conference, Lancaster, has experienced a 20 percent decline in this decade, in contrast to steady increases in those preceding. Thank God that numbers are not the only measure of church health. Sometimes, indeed, they are positively misleading. I pray that in this case they may only partly conceal a deep, new turning to God, issuing in all kinds of practical steps in local and global witness.

Loren Horst
President of Virginia Mennonite Missions

Loren Horst

Congregations are reaching out. While congregations will always struggle to keep a right balance between maintenance and mission, almost every congregation is trying. "Mission," though variously defined, is still one of the highest values in the church.

There is a resurgence of new church formation, albeit taking various forms. Church planting is again on the rise. A recent tally by a number of conferences in the east totaled 47 new churches or ministries in some stage of vision and formation.

The pace is accelerating compared with the last number of years. While the number of people willing to be supportive of church planting may have declined a bit, they still represent 78 percent of Mennonite Church USA members, according to Conrad Kanagy's Church Member Profile. That translates into 6,678 people in my own conference. The challenge is to help people move from "willing" to "doing."

Mennonite Church USA is becoming more global and multicultural. Nearly 30 percent of the members in my conference are members of racial-ethnic churches. Such congregations are the growing edge of our denomination, so the percentage will continue to grow. Such congregations still do not carry corresponding authority or responsibility for Mennonite Church USA, so work remains to be done.

Most congregations now have members who are globally aware, and many are even capable of mounting mission efforts far beyond our borders or neighborhoods, with or without the help of mission agencies. Some confusion will result, but given the choice between orderly control and a dynamic Holy Spirit global movement, I'll take the latter.—*Anna Groff*

We are not all called to be "missionaries" in the traditional sense of the word, but we are all "sent."—Sharon Waltner

Progress grows from conflict, leader says

Burkina Faso's 500 Mennonites known as people of peace, conflict mediators.

Siaka Traoré

Without conflict, there is no progress, Siaka Traoré told a group of West African church leaders and expatriate missionaries at the Institut Missiologique du Sahel, an interdenominational mission training school in Ouagadougou last October.

"The nonviolent approach to conflict relentlessly seeks out dialogue, and if refused, provokes it," said Traoré, president of Eglise Evangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso.

Burkina Faso's 500 Mennonites may seem like a few grains of salt in the sauce of a predominantly Muslim nation of more than 13 million. But because they are known as people of peace, Mennonites are sought out to season society through mediation of family and societal disputes.

Mennonites are increasingly recognized for their work in reconciliation and social justice, says Jeff Warkentin, who, with his wife, Tany, works as a church planter in Burkina Faso through Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

Mennonites entered the arena of national conflict mediation in 2001, when President Blaise Compaoré called for a National Day of Forgiveness to bring together factions that had fermented during the four years following the coup d'état that brought him to office. Traoré, appreciated for his peace-building ability, was named to the presidential advisory commission charged with implementing the conciliatory actions resulting from the Day of Forgiveness.

Traoré has experienced both conflict's pain and the transformative aspects from the beginning of his Christian life. Born into a Muslim family, Traoré found compelling questions in the Islamic texts he studied as a boy but few satisfying answers. In the life and teaching of Jesus, Traoré found the truth he longed for.

Though many Muslim families reject those who convert to Christianity, Traoré and his father found a reconciling path that allowed them to respect each other's faith.

"What convinced my father was the correlation between what I said about my faith and how I lived my faith. I continued to obey him," Traoré said.
—Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mennonite Mission Network, with Jeff and Tany Warkentin and Dan Dyck of Mennonite Church Canada Witness

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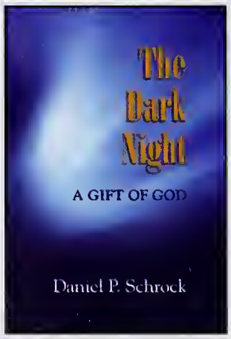

The Dark Night: A Gift of God
Many Christians enter a period when they feel abandoned by God and experience a dryness in their personal lives. **Daniel P. Schrock** demystifies the quite common phenomenon of the dark night, which is often confused with depression. Schrock connects the dark night to Christian discipleship and God's mission of creating shalom. It functions a bit like a second conversion, he writes. The dark night is ultimately a gift from God.
Paper, 218 pages, $16.99

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EMU helps Virginia Tech's peace center

Former horticulture professor who lost wife in the shootings now heads program.

Twenty-one months ago, professor Jerzy Nowak was writing a grant at Virginia Tech when student Seung-Hui Cho began a shooting rampage. When the shootings were over, Nowak's wife, Jocelyne Couture-Nowak, was among the 32 who died.

In the chaotic and grief-filled aftermath, one of the three Nowak daughters, 23-year-old Francine, told a reporter that the best way of memorializing her mother and the other victims would be establishing a peace center at Virginia Tech.

In May 2008, Virginia Tech announced the establishment of a Center of Peace Studies and Violence Prevention, with Nowak as its head. Promoting peace is a new life mission for Nowak, who previously headed Virginia Tech's horticulture department. Nowak led a group of 11 from Virginia Tech to Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 22, to meet with its president, academic leaders in conflict transformation and students studying peacebuilding.

"I knew almost nothing about Eastern Mennonite before I started exploring how to set up our peace studies program," says Nowak. "But among numerous information packages and offers of collaboration I have received, I found its peace program to be fascinating and one of the most highly regarded."

The Virginia Tech group observed an undergraduate class in justice, peace and conflict studies, met with professors and staff at EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding and learned how CJP's Practice and Training Institute serves as a bridge between the theories and skills taught in the classroom and their application.

Nowak had a particular interest in the global nature of EMU's work—CJP has hosted students and practitioners from dozens of countries over the last 12 months—because he himself was born in Poland and has worked on agricultural matters in West Germany, Nigeria and Canada.

"We are pleased to collaborate with Virginia Tech," says Loren Swartzendruber, EMU president. "The more of us in the peace business, the better."

Nowak's wife, Jocelyne, was teaching an intermediate French class in Norris Hall on the morning of April 16, 2007, when she heard the gunfire of Seung-Hui Cho. She led her students to barricade the door with a desk and ushered them away from the door. The barricade did not stop Cho. Couture-Nowak and 11 of the 22 registered in her class died. She has been memorialized with the Jocelyne Couture-Nowak Terrace Garden at Virginia Tech, as well as with a scholarship in her name awarded annually to French majors. Virginia Tech students have also organized a new foreign language program named "Teach for Madame" in honor of Couture-Nowak, wherein members teach French to elementary school students. And last but not least, her husband now heads a peace center in the building where she died.—*Bonnie Price Lofton of Eastern Mennonite University*

Jon Styer

Eastern Mennonite University president Loren Swartzendruber (left) meets with Jerzy Nowak, head of Center of Peace Studies and Violence Prevention at Virginia Tech.

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Man follows call to work with homeless

Lee Penner wanted to do something more than hand out tracts at Wal-mart.

Lee Penner

Lee Penner, Newton, Kan., was restless and felt like a man without a spiritual home. Though his former church focused on sharing how Jesus saves hearts, there seemed less interest in sharing how Jesus' way of life called believers to meet the social needs of their neighbors.

Penner's search for how to better integrate his faith led to his volunteer work with homeless people in Harvey County—a ministry supported and encouraged by his current congregation, First Mennonite Church in Newton.

"I wanted something beyond the idea of sharing Jesus with people by handing out spiritual tracts at Wal-Mart or on street corners," says Penner, now First Mennonite's representative to the Harvey County Homeless Shelter. "For me to continue to be spiritually healthy, I needed to better connect Sunday worship with real needs of real people. I needed to integrate my heart with my hands."

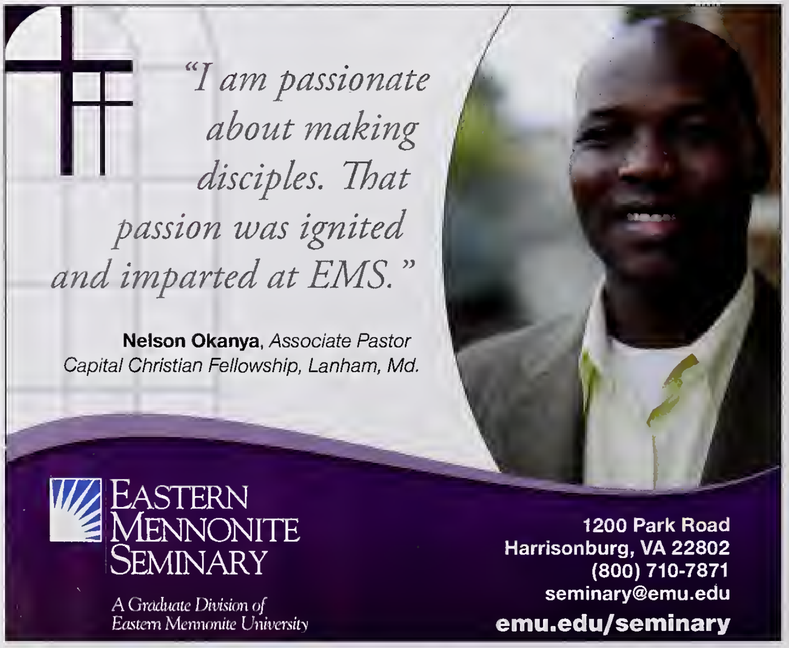
For me to continue to be spiritually healthy, I needed to better connect Sunday worship with real needs of real people.
—Lee Penner

Penner's call began when he went on a DOOR program mission trip to Denver as a sponsor with his former congregation's youth.

Penner returned and thought, Why are we always sending our young people to other countries or other communities to do mission? Why do we always have to go to other places to do this stuff?

That question led Penner to realize he must practice his faith locally if he expected the wider church to do the same. So he began volunteering with the homeless shelter a couple blocks from his home.

"I became a team leader at the shelter, which means that one week each quarter I engage people from my own congregation," says Penner, a shelter board member. "Various classes at the church are each responsible for one night of that week to bring meals and take shifts to connect with the residents and stay overnight."



"I am passionate about making disciples. That passion was ignited and imparted at EMS."

Nelson Okanya, *Associate Pastor*
Capital Christian Fellowship, Lanham, Md.

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A warning label comes with involvement, he says. It takes energy and sacrifice of time and resources when one begins to do a hands-on ministry in one's backyard.

For Penner it has meant following up with the shelter residents when they leave. He became friends with someone who later took his own life, received 3 a.m. phone calls from folks in crisis and worked with addicts who had no food or rides to the hospital.

"There is a Vietnam vet in our community who has done some informal polling in Newton," Penner says. "He has found at least 20 families who don't have any utilities. They have no water, no gas, no electricity and are afraid they will end up with no children, too, if the system finds out what dire straits they are in.

Their needs stay hush-hush, covered up a lot in communities like ours. But the needs are still here, even when you can't see them."

Though there is much need in communities, ministries such as the shelter do stabilize lives and help people again become contributing members of their communities, he says. For example, after a year of independent living, former residents may volunteer at the shelter. After three and half years in operation, the shelter has a number of former residents who are now valuable volunteer staff.

Penner and First Mennonite—along with other volunteers who are part of a broad ecumenical circle that engages the shelter—are learning what it means to be wide-eyed and compassionate.

Today's economic meltdowns impact more than just what is traditionally thought of as the down-and-out, he says. God's people understand they share a common humanity with those who have scant resources to cope with tough times.

"At our homeless shelter, we see a lot of women and families with kids who go to school in Newton," Penner says. "When you are eating supper with these families, all of a sudden stereotypes fall away. These are golden moments that put this all into perspective."

One of those moments came when the New Disciples Sunday school class from First Mennonite showed up with a meal, and the kids of class members began to play with kids of the homeless mothers.

"That's about as good as it gets," he says.
—Laurie Oswald Robinson

Interest groups to meet in Paraguay

Special interest groups see the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly in Paraguay in July as an opportunity to confer with colleagues from around the world.

Stuart Clark, senior policy advisor with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, will lead planning for a series of four workshops on "Refinding our place in creation." Albert C. Lobe, representing MWC, and Gerhard Pries, representing Mennonite Economic Development Associates, and two individuals from the global South will assist in facilitating the 75-minute workshops July 15-18, with a half-day field trip to a MEDA Paraguay "green" project on July 17.

Another special interest group is Indigenous People of the Americas. Some 35 Indigenous people from western Canada, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and South Dakota, including seven young people and a few Mennonite Church Native Ministries workers, expect to attend Assembly Gathered.

Approximately 10 people from Latin American churches in Guatemala, Peru and Panama plan to attend, as do many Paraguayan indigenous Mennonites. The Indigenous People of the Americas will gather at the assembly site in Asunción for workshops. Those from the Paraguayan Chaco plan to host the visitors from North America and Latin America who will travel to the Chaco after Assembly Gathered.

A few of the other special interests groups planning meetings in connection with Assembly 15 are Latin American women theologians with some African counterparts (July 13-14); theological educators (July 9-11 consultation); business and faith (July 12-13 consultation); Francophone Network, former Mennonite Central Committee/PAX volunteers; physicians, mental health practitioners, Mennonite historians, Associaçao Evangélica Menonita (Brazil) leaders, global Mennonite secondary school representatives, various mission agencies and representatives of church-to-church partnerships.

The MWC officers, Executive Committee, General Council, commissions, continental caucuses and the communication team will attend to the business of MWC. Numerous MWC-related groups will also meet, including the second MWC Global Youth Summit and the Global Mission Fellowship.

These groups will convene before, during and after Assembly Gathered, July 14-19, outside morning and evening worship services.—*Ferne Burkhardt of Mennonite World Conference*

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"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

CALENDAR

Benefit Walk will benefit **No Longer Alone Ministries (NLAM)**, March 7, at the Landisville Mennonite Church, 3320 Bowman Road, Landisville, Pa. NLAM provides supportive, caring services to individuals experiencing significant mental illness and their families in Lancaster County. To register and/or get more information, contact: office@nlam.org or visit www.nlam.org.

Spring Scrapbook Retreat, March 6-8, **Camp Friedenswald, Cassopolis, Mich.** Go to www.friedenswald.org for more detailed information or call 269-476-9744.

On March 14 **Friends of Shirati**, a Lancaster, Pa., based nonprofit organization, will be having their ***20th annual fund-raising banquet*** at the Gathering Place in Mt. Joy, Pa. The money collected will support our projects of purchasing medicines and medical supplies, purchasing a new x-ray machine and resurfacing the dirt airstrip. Reservations can be made by calling 717-299-5998, or on www.friendsofshirati.org.

Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen, Pa., will hold a ***100th Anniversary Celebration*** on Aug. 16. The all-day service will include a "reproduction" of a 1909 morning service (period attire optional), displays, drama, testimonies and ending with a "Parade of Music" from German hymns to the current worship group. Everyone is welcome. Contact Pastor Steve Crane, pastorscrane@epix.net, for more information.

WORKERS

Banks, Otis M. Jr., pastor at Diamond Street Mennonite Church, Philadelphia, Pa., retired Dec. 31, 2008.

Beyer, E. Eugene, associate pastor at Millport Mennonite Church, Lititz, Pa., retired Dec. 31, 2008.

Eberly, Harold B., deacon at Bowmansville Mennonite Church, Bowmansville, Pa., retired Dec. 31, 2008.

Good, John W., deacon at Strasburg Mennonite Church, Strasburg, Pa., retired Dec. 31, 2008.

Landis, Paul S., transferred his credential from Lancaster Mennonite Conference to Koinonia Fellowship on Dec. 17, 2008.

Wendland, Wolfgang K., transferred his credential from Lancaster Mennonite Conference to Church of the Brethren-SE District on Dec. 17, 2008.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Blackburn, Madalyn Shade, Dec. 1, 2008, to Mike and Jane Musser Blackburn, Port Republic, Va.

Gering, Emerson Jon, Dec. 30, 2008, to Jon and Deborah Ediger Gering, Kirksville, Mo.

Harman, Grady Corbet, Dec. 26, 2008, to Hans and Sarah Link Harman, Harrisonburg, Va.

Kratz, Ethan Samuel, Jan. 20, to Erik and Sarah Troyer Kratz, Harrisonburg, Va.

Miller, Finnly Raigan, Dec. 20, 2008, to Mark and Ashley Sauder Miller, Harrisonburg, Va.

Miller, Katelynn Ruth, Jan. 22, to Keith and Karen Callahan Miller, Louisville, Ohio.

Schrock, Anna Yoder, Jan. 31 to Jon and Mandy Yoder Schrock, Goshen, Ind.

Simpson, Ian Robert Blough, Nov. 5, 2008, to John and Bethany Blough Simpson, Denver, Colo.

Wagler, Ava Nadine, Oct. 17, 2008, to Curt and Lori Brown Wagler, Wayland, Iowa.

Wheeler, Andreas Francis, Oct. 17, 2008, to Diek Wheeler and Greta Ann Herin, Harrisonburg, Va.

Yoder, Valentina LaVerne Pimentel, Nov. 20, 2008, to Lawson and Mary Pimentel Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va.

MARRIAGES

Brubaker/Horst: Jessica Brubaker, South Bend, Ind., and Dan Horst, Goshen, Ind., Jan. 10, at Reith Recital Hall, Goshen.

Claassen/Froese: Rebecca Claassen, Moses Lake, Wash., and Beau Froese, Inman, Kan., Dec. 27, 2008, at Menno Mennonite Church, Ritzville, Wash.

Martinez/Smucker: Jerome Martinez, Quarryville, Pa., and Lindsay Smucker, Goshen, Ind., Jan. 3, at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Swartz/Vandevander: Emily Swartz, Harrisonburg, Va., and Robert Vandevander, Harrisonburg, Jan. 24, at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

DEATHS

Abrahams, Norman E., 85, North Newton, Kan., died Jan. 8 in an automobile accident. Spouse: Ethel Grace Ewert Abrahams. Parents: Cornelius and Anna Dalke Abrahams. Children: Nan Abrahams Graber, Dwayne, Nadine Abrahams Epp; six grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 1 at Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton.

Bachman, Aldine Elizabeth Metz, 89, Hopedale, Ill., died Jan. 17 of natural causes. Spouse: David Bachman (deceased). Parents: Fred and Mary Koch Metz. Children: Roger David, Eunice Kay Harris, Marilyn Litwiller, Alice Ann Slager; 11 grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 24 at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

Baer, Lowell F., 96, Sterling, Ill., died Jan. 16. Spouse: Lee Gowan Baer. Spouse: Dorothy Musgrave Baer (deceased). Parents: Lloyd and Bertha Hinz Baer. Children: Barbara Ebersole, Judith Long, Beth Shank, Dorothy Ulrich, Lila Miller, Judith Repass, June Sullivan; 18 grandchildren; six step-grandchildren; numerous great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 22 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling.

Bender, Rose M. Yoder, 92, Kalona, Iowa, died Jan. 22. Spouse: Gerald Bender (deceased). Parents: Mose F. and Hannah Graber Yoder. Children: Marlene Ropp, Ruby Miller, Dale Schrock, Delbert Schrock; 24 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 26 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

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Bixler, Paul E., 71, Saginaw, Mich., died Dec. 12, 2008, of a stroke. Spouse: Lavonne Gisel Bixler. Parents: Reuben and Elma Nussbaum Bixler. Children: Reginald, Roderick, Regina Walczak; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 16 at Our Redeemer Evangelical Church, Midland, Mich.

Denlinger, Anna Martha Groff, 82, East Petersburg, Pa., died Jan. 18 of cancer. Spouse: Clifford E. Denlinger. Parents: Abram and Miriam Metzler Groff. Children: Charmayne Brubaker, Philip, Bethany Denlinger, Steven; six grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 22 at East Petersburg Mennonite Church.

Gautsche, Richard "Dick" E., 75, Lexington, Ky., died Jan. 3. Spouse: Eunice Zook Little Gautsche. Parents: Oscar and Herma Noffziger Gautsche. Children: Nancy Gautsche, Gary Gautsche, Randy Gautsche, James Little, David Little, Amy Swartzentruber; eight grandchildren. Memorial service: Jan. 11 at First United Methodist Church, Lexington. Memorial service to be held later at Belmont Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

Gehman, Irene L., 62, Gilbertsville, Pa., died Nov. 4, 2008. Parents: Melvin S. and Sara L. Brubaker Gehman. Funeral: Nov. 10 at Bally Mennonite Church, Bally, Pa.

Gerber, Clarence, 90, Dalton, Ohio, died Jan. 5 following a period of declining health. Spouse: Lydia Steiner Gerber (deceased). Parents: Menno and Anna Moser Gerber. Funeral: Jan. 17 at Kidron Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio.

Graber, Fern Irene Klopfenstein, 90, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 22, 2008. Spouse: Dillon Joseph Graber (deceased). Parents: James and Mabel Eicher Klopfenstein. Children: Charlotte Rosenberger, Janet Gerber, Connie Marner; nine grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 24 at College Mennonite Church.

Hertzler, Emanuel C., 92, Granger, Ind., died Jan. 28. Spouse: Myrtle Schnell Hertzler (deceased). Parents: Aldus and Ellen Kratz Hertzler. Children: Barbara Cassel Martin, Linda L. Peirard, Suzanne Scarsella; four grandchildren; three step-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 31 at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend, Ind.

Judy, Richard M., Jr., 56, Canfield, Ohio, died Jan. 10 of a pulmonary embolism. Parents: Richard M., Sr., and Lorraine Sweringen Judy. Funeral: Jan. 15 at Midway Mennonite Church, Columbiana, Ohio.

Krabill, Willard Stanley, 82, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 6 of cancer. Spouse: Grace Ellen Hershberger Krabill. Parents: Mahlon and Ella Conrad Krabill. Children: Merrill, Jeannie Miller, Karen Krabill, Ron; nine grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 9 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Lapp, Lucy N. Miller, 86, Parkesburg, Pa., died Dec. 16, 2008 of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Leroy S. Lapp (deceased). Parents: Nathaniel P. and Mary J. Miller Miller. Children: Mary Etta King, Mel M., Jay, Carl R.; 12 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 30 at Calvary Monument Bible Church, Paradise, Pa.

Lapp, Marian F. Trimble, 87, Sterling, Ill., died Jan. 31. Spouse: James Lapp (deceased). Parents: Harry and Bessie Frank Trimble. Children: Dale, Vonda James, Nancy Hunphrey; nine grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 4 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling.

Leichty, Leonard John, 85, Leo, Ind., died Jan. 6. Spouse: Carolyn Hartzler Leichty. Parents: Daniel and Alma Yoder Leichty. Children: Phillip, LaMar; five grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 11 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind.

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Camps with Meaning March 27-29
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Mast, Sara "Edna" Mast, 96, Cochranville, Pa., died Jan. 11 of coronary artery disease. Spouse: Alvin Isaac Mast (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Emma King Mast. Children: Vernon A., Dale J., Larry D., Verda R. Geib, Anna M. Bishop; 11 grandchildren; 21 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 15 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen, Pa.

Mierau, Lucille Culp, 85, Goshen, Ind. and Tucson, Ariz., died Jan. 3 of injuries sustained in a fall. Spouse: Jacob Mierau (deceased). Spouse: Earl Culp (deceased). Children: Judith E. Culp, Dennis Culp; three grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Burial: Jan. 10 in Phoenix, Ariz. Memorial Service: Jan. 17 at Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Miller, Ella May Weaver, 93, Harrisonburg, Va., died Oct. 26, 2008. Spouse: Samuel E. Miller (deceased). Parents: Reuben M. and Ella Neuhauser Weaver. Children: S. Ernest, John, Martin, Jeanne Troyer; 12 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 29 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Nafziger, Marvin J., 75, Archbold, Ohio, died Jan. 25. Spouse: Vicki Mack Frank Nafziger. Parents: Harry J. and Rosa Short Nafziger. Children: Greg Nafziger, Dave Nafziger, Julie Ruffer, Joe Frank, Jeff Frank; four grandchildren; 10 step grandchildren; four step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 29 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Rhodes, Charles Lindamood, 85, Broadway, Va., died Jan. 26. Spouse: Janet Dove Rhodes. Parents: Robert Neff Rhodes, Sr., and Mattie Lindamood Rhodes. Funeral: Jan. 29 at Zion Mennonite Church, Broadway.

Rohr, Robert C., 74, Camp Hill, Pa., died Oct. 20, 2008, during knee replacement surgery. Spouse: M. Lois Beyer Rohr. Parents: Samuel M. and Emma Cassel Rohr. Children: Sandra Shamansky, Robert L., Jeffrey L.; six grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 28 at Slate Hill Mennonite Church, Camp Hill.

Stoltzfus, Ruth Wenger Brunk, 93, Harrisonburg, Va., died Dec. 2, 2008. Spouse: Grant M. Stoltzfus (deceased). Parents: George R. and Katie Wenger Brunk. Children: Eugene, Kathryn Stoltzfus Fairfield, Ruth Stoltzfus Jost, Helen Stoltzfus; 12 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 6 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Summers, Leon M., 89, Gap, Pa., died Jan. 12 of CVA. Spouse: Ida Arment Stoltzfus Summers. Spouse: Ida Petersheim Summers (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Rachel Summers. Children: Leon, Jr., Nevin, Cathy Miller, Nancy Summers; stepchildren: Steve Stoltzfus, Galen Stoltzfus, Anna Mary Boettger, Jean Hoover, Rosella Coblentz; many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, step-grandchildren, step-great-grandchildren, foster grandchildren and foster great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 16 at Hinkletown Mennonite Church, Ephrata, Pa.

Weaver, Clarence L., 71, Ephrata, Pa., died Jan. 23. Spouse: Rhoda J. Martin Weaver. Parents: Noah B. and Anna W. Sauder Weaver. Children: Bruce A., Carol L. Martin, Doris A. Kurtz, Linda J. Ulrich; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 27 at Ephrata Mennonite Church.

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MCC Washington Office Spring Seminar in Wichita, Kan., March 28-30. Learn about the global food crisis; its causes and some solutions, worship and speakers: mcc.org/us/washington or 202-544-6564.

Hesston College seeks applicants for a ***head women's softball coach***. As a part of the Athletic Department, the person in this part-time position will be responsible for all aspects of the softball program, including recruiting, scheduling, managing a budget, travel arrangements, etc. Qualifications include experience and knowledge of fastpitch softball, the ability to teach the skills and strategy of the game to college student-athletes, recruiting skills, love for students and commitment to Mennonite higher education. This position will be open with duties commencing August 2009. Review of applications begins immediately and continues until the position is filled. To apply, send resumé, application and faith statement as found at www.hesston.edu/employment to Art Mullet, Athletic Director, Box 3000, Hesston, KS 67062. EOE

Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan., is seeking a ***full-time lead pastor***. Contact Elam Peachey by email: Elamp@cox.net; phone 620-217-8149.

Part-time conference minister for **New York Mennonite Conference** beginning immediately. Conference profile available: http://nymennon.bfn.org/. MLI required. Contact Dale Beebee dbeebee@roadrunner.com; 585-593-5598. Applications accepted through February 2009.

Mountville Mennonite Church (Lancaster Mennonite Conference) seeking ***full-time associate pastor for youth ministry*** with training or experience in youth ministry and discipleship, commitment to Anabaptist core values and passion for reaching unchurched youth. Starting summer 2009. Applications requested by March 1. Contact: Jim Herr jcjbc5@aol.com; 717-285-2153.

The Mennonite Heritage Cruise and its international resource team invites you to join the ***15th annual cruise in Ukraine on the Dnieper River and Black Sea*** in late September 2009. This has been the ultimate 15-day roots discovery experience for 2,500 descendants of Russian Mennonites and others. For details of the cruise Google "Mennonite Heritage Cruise" or phone Marina Unger 800-387-1488, ext. 2827.

Swamp Mennonite Church, www.swampmennonite.org, seeks a passionate ***full-time senior pastor*** to focus on preaching, pastoral care and equipping leaders. SMC is a Christ-centered, welcoming church (regular attendance of 140) that is a fellowship of believers committed to serving our community, living in peace and making Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and worship relevant in the Quakertown, Pa., area. Seminary training is required. Interested people should email the Lead Pastor Search Committee at info@swampmennonite.org.

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– Laura Brenneman, Ph.D., assistant professor of religion and director of peace and conflict studies

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A YouTube presidency

Gordon Houser

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

The election of Barack Obama, now the first African-American president of the United States, marks many firsts, many changes in our nation's history. But one change perhaps overlooked is the expanded use of the Internet and social media to reach a greater number of people than previously, particularly younger voters.

Obama's campaign proved revolutionary and effective in its use of social media such as Facebook, instant messaging, Twitter and YouTube. The idea behind social media is to create and encourage a community of users communicating with each other.

Now that he's president, his staff is working to use this same media to promote broad changes in health care and environmental and fiscal policy, according to an article by Jim Rutenberg and Adam Nagourney in the Jan. 26 *New York Times*.

This marks a change in strategy for getting one's agenda to the public. "Like George W. Bush before him, Mr. Obama is trying to bypass the mainstream news media and take messages straight to the public," write Rutenberg and Nagourney.

For example, Obama has used such media for his weekly address to the nation. Under previous presidents, such a speech was recorded and released to radio stations on Saturday mornings. Obama records a video, and on Saturday it is posted on the White House Web site and on YouTube.

Macon Phillips, the "new media" director for Obama's administration, says: "Historically the media has been able to draw out a lot of information and characterize it for people. And there's a growing appetite from people to do it themselves."

News media advocates have expressed concern about this approach. They are uncomfortable with "what effectively could become an informational network reaching 13 million people, or more, with an unchallenged, governmental point of view," write Rutenberg and Nagourney.

"They're beginning to create their own journalism, their own description of events of the day, but it's not an independent voice making that description," says Bill Kovach, the chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists. "It's troublesome until we know how it's going to be used and the degree to which it can be used on behalf of the people, and not on behalf of only one point of view."

What does this change mean for the rest of us?

That may depend upon our own use of such media. But it shouldn't change how we should always approach what we read or hear or see. We need to approach all messages (including this one) with a critical sense. If we are interested in more than simply reinforcing our own opinions, we should check a variety of sources.

Another lesson for the church is to learn about social media and explore ways to use it in reaching people otherwise unknown to us. Behind social media lies an emphasis on community. But in this case community is often virtual—via the Internet rather than face to face. Such community is much more a part of people under 30, say, than over 30. But that may be changing.

Interestingly, behind Obama's use of social media in his campaign and now in his new strategy is the hope that it leads to face-to-face communication (or at least texting). And word of mouth, as advertisers know, is an effective means of spreading information and ideas.

Can the church learn to use such media in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ? Parts of the church are doing just that, some more effectively than others. It seems at least worth exploring. The times are changing.

BEST FILMS OF 2008

Gordon Houser:

1. **4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days**
2. **The Visitor**
3. **Happy-Go-Lucky**
4. **The Edge of Heaven**
5. **Wall-E**
6. **Encounters at the End of the World**
7. **Frost/Nixon**
8. **Man on Wire**
9. **Milk**
10. **Slumdog Millionaire**

Anna Groff:

1. **Milk**
2. **The Visitor**
3. **The Edge of Heaven**
4. **Happy-Go-Lucky**
5. **The Curious Case of Benjamin Button**
6. **Vicky Christina Barcelona**
7. **Slumdog Millionaire**
8. **Wall-E**
9. **Rachel Getting Married**
10. **Doubt**

BEST BOOKS OF 2008

2666: A Novel by Roberto Bolaño

Home: A Novel by Marilynne Robinson

How Fiction Works by James Wood

The Plague of Doves: A Novel by Louise Erdrich

The Purple Crown: The Politics of Martyrdom by Tripp York

BOOKS

Cynicism and Hope: Reclaiming Discipleship in a Postdemocratic Society, edited by Meg E. Cox (Cascade Books, 2009, $17), includes presentations at a conference at Reba Place Church, Evanston, Ill., in 2007. Inspired by an address Mennonite Peter Dula gave at a Christian peace witness for Iraq, the essays here address the dual topic from various angles. Dale Suderman's "Cynicism as Therapy" writes, "Our problem may not be cynicism so much as unfettered and unexamined idealisms." The essays vary in quality, but readers will find numerous insights. The book concludes with a powerful poem by Ruth Goring called "Ingredients."

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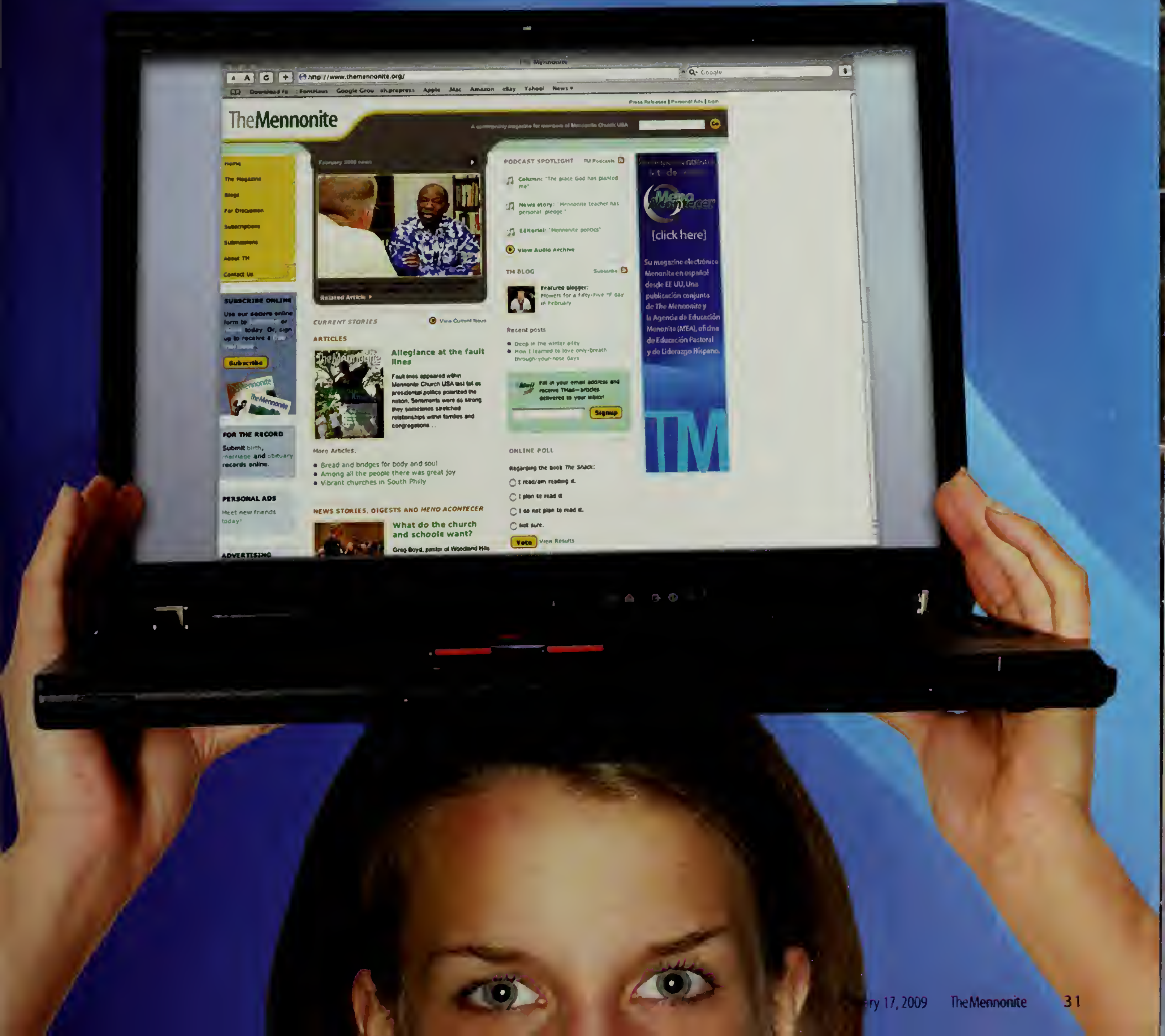

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- Among all the people there was great joy
- Vibrant churches in South Philly

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Greg Boyd, pastor of Woodland Hills

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ONLINE POLL

Regarding the book *The Shack*:

○ I read/am reading it.
○ I plan to read it
○ I do not plan to read it.
○ Not sure.

Meno Acontecer

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Everett J. Thomas

Damaged vets need healing

The article "Wounds of War" by Carolyn Holderread Heggen (July 8, 2008) called on Mennonite congregations to "welcome combat veterans … suffering terrors of the soul."

We received little response to this call, and I have been curious whether any congregations are focusing in new ways on this national shame. When I visited Chicago recently, an article in the *Chicago Tribune Magazine* reminded me of Heggen's plea.

The article, entitled "Relief Efforts," describes the 20-year-old Homeless Sandwich Run coordinated by Vietnam War veterans and other volunteers. They start their run about noon every Sunday and serve 1,300 sandwiches to some 800 homeless people in the center city.

"It's getting bigger every year," said one volunteer, who has been making the run for five years. "Mostly there are a lot of Nam guys out there homeless. But we're seeing more and more guys from Iraq and Afghanistan. Kids come home. There are no jobs. They've been deployed too many times. They're disenchanted. Messed up in the head. Drug issues. Mental issues. Suicide. It's a shame."

Some ambitious and savvy young Mennonites addressed another national shame nearly 60 years ago: the treatment of the mentally ill in asylums and hospital wards. They helped galvanize national interest. It brought a sea change to attitudes about mental illness and treatment.

A missional church discerns where God is at work in the world and then joins in that work.

Where among us now might be another such group of energized young Mennonites ready to spark a similar phenomenon today?

Unlike the 1940s, when most Mennonites lived on farms and in rural areas, we are assimilated into our culture and increasingly comfortable addressing public policy issues. Although only 10 percent of us live in big cities, according to a 2006 profile of Mennonite Church USA, most of us live in small cities and suburbia. This, along with increased levels of education and professionalism, gives us additional resources.

Heggen, a psychotherapist who specializes in trauma recovery, offered to assist Mennonite congregations wishing to help those paralyzed with shame by their combat experiences.

"Our society never successfully addressed the mental health problems of many of our Vietnam veterans," Heggen wrote in her article. "If you doubt this, visit a homeless shelter or talk to men living on our streets. Some mental health professionals now speak of a 'tsunami of mental health problems' facing us as more and more traumatized veterans return from Iraq and Afghanistan."

In this recessionary economy there are needs everywhere. And there are homeless people other than former combat veterans. But as a peace church we are uniquely positioned to address the wounds of war manifest in our midst. Doing so will help us move from "passivism" to a healing pacifism. It would illustrate—to others as well as our children—that peacemaking is action rather than quietude.

Only communities of faith have the language and understandings to address the core spiritual residue of war, Heggen said as she described the spiritual hell into which many veterans believe they have eternally cast themselves. It is the church that understands confession and forgiveness, grace and mercy, transformation and conversion, Heggen said and then asked, "Can we learn how to apply these gospel truths and extend our hands of welcoming compassion to spiritually damaged veterans and their loved ones?"

This call is too important to fade into memories of good ideas. We hear again and again from Mennonite Church USA leaders that a missional church discerns where God is working in the world and then joins in that work.

God is at work through such programs as the Homeless Sandwich Run and countless other efforts with emotionally wounded combat veterans. Those of us who live near such ministries can join in what God is doing. In doing so we incarnate the gospel.—*ejt*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

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Not a small thing

James Schrag is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

The road map of faith is a thing of our own making; it is our response to the gift of the leading of the Holy Spirit. This map can guide us past the next horizon and around the next corner of challenge to a new discovery of God's presence and purpose.

This issue features The Corinthian Plan, designed to provide health care for all pastors. This is a not-yet-achieved aspiration for mutual aid that has come from the imagination of many thoughtful and full-of-faith people. Its birth came by consensus and approval of our delegate body in San José, Calif., in 2007.

It is a spirit-led venture of faith that now focuses on congregational decisions to make it work. Its implementation relies on the vision and faith of many, many decision-makers in hundreds of congregations across our church.

The last 25 years of our social and political life in the United States has espoused the merits of individual initiative and taking care of self. Do for yourself and expect others to be able to do the same for themselves. But the catch is that not everyone is privileged with the same opportunities to do for themselves. Thus the gap between rich and poor has widened. Millions of Americans do not have health insurance. The last quarter-century of me-first opportunism, now run rampant, has collapsed into individual and corporate greed, with people reaching beyond their means just because everyone was doing it, and has brought our society to the brink of economic ruin.

In this recent era, our traditional Mennonite frugality, our constant eye for the best buy, has made us hard bargainers and sometimes self-sacrificial in what we spend even on ourselves. Now in these hard times the temptation to dig our heels deeper into such values and practices could become even stronger, some say. But not me. I have more faith in our character than this. These are temporary habits. The value of "do for yourself" and "just make the best deal" is not found among our longer-held and deeper values as followers of Christ.

To the contrary, the value of biblical mutual aid is synonymous with being Mennonite in the eyes of the American public. This has remained central to our witness. Generosity of spirit and practice is our deeper and better instinct and has been practiced much longer than any me-first practice we may discover lurking in our souls. Looking after the good of others is an old notion among us—born not only of common human kindness but generated by lives lived in faith in God and by paying attention to the promptings of the Spirit.

It may look like a small thing, even small enough to avoid doing in your congregation and mine—to join others in a program of carefully planned mutual aid to share the burden of support of health care for all our pastors, for their sakes and for all our sakes. But this is not a small thing. It is not just about a congregation's ability to find its next pastor, though this is one consequence of the plan. The Corinthian Plan of health care for all our pastors stands as a witness for who we say we are—for our vision of lives lived in community with each other and with our neighbors, whose well-being we also take upon ourselves to share.

My prayer and confidence is that in the coming months, through joining in The Corinthian Plan, congregations will rise to the occasion of such a witness, one by one, affirming our deeper values of faith and mutual aid, of sharing and generosity, which are the hallmark of our witness. And having done this, we can depend upon the Spirit to point us to even greater witness, as yet unimagined. TM

TheMennonite

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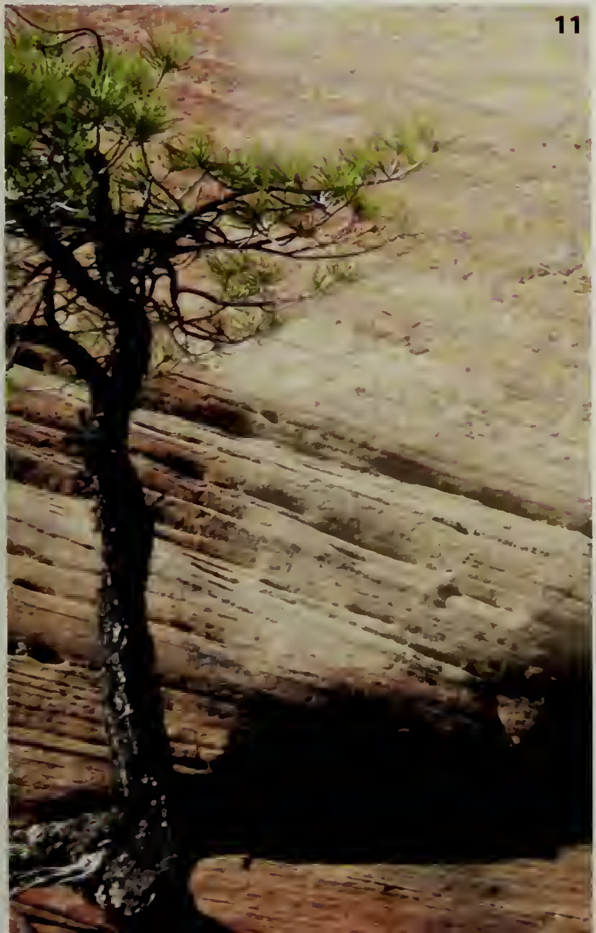

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Cover illustration: Pastor Mike Derstine (holding umbrella) with Warren Alderfer. By ’09 *TM* photo contest entrant Dawn Ranck, Hatfield, Pa.

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Pastoral ministry program overlooked

As I read the annual Mennonite education issue (Jan. 20), I was so glad to be reminded once again of the importance of Mennonite education. However, I am again disappointed to see the pastoral ministry program at Hesston (Kan.) College overlooked. Many fine pastors and church workers have come out of that program. In Allegheny Mennonite Conference there are five Hesston pastoral ministry graduates serving as ordained pastors.

Hesston pastoral ministry graduates have "a clear grasp and understanding of Anabaptist-Mennonite identity, theology and faith." Those who serve as pastors do so as well as any of their peers. Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., is not the only "pastor-training school."—*Melodi A. Shull, Roaring Spring, Pa.*

What went wrong with Winnipeg summit?

Regarding the article, "What Went Wrong With Winnipeg Summit?" (Feb. 3): The 61 U.S. Mennonites would have been 63 were it not for the dates. These important meetings came right in the middle of two family gatherings. There are nine siblings from five states that gather every three years. On my wife's side, we came from three states, missionaries in Bulgaria and a 93-year-old mother-in-law. I tried to convince my wife that I could fly to Winnipeg during the three-day window between the two family gatherings. Since we were hosting my extended family, which numbers in the 70s, we scratched that idea.

My point is that it may be possible that 150 others who wanted to attend faced similar dilemmas. All my life I have felt it crucial to stay connected to the larger church family, and I lament our disconnect with our Canadian brothers and sisters. To Pam Peters-Pries and Jim Schrag, from a retired pastor and current overseer and a conference junky, don't give up. Joint meetings are valuable, and if at all possible, you will see us at the next one.—*Harvey Chupp, Shipshewana, Ind.*

Ideas for any future summit

Thanks for your coverage of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA's recent efforts to address concerns about the Winnipeg summit (Feb. 3). Here are my own suggestions:

1. A future summit should address issues that are explicitly unique and integral to the binational community. We need workshops that face these questions: Who are we as a binational church? What should our relationship look like now? What can we do together that we can't do alone?
2. A future summit should offer a time for participants to work together to create something tangible for our home churches (national and local), governments and media. It should move beyond broad issues and into action.
3. A future summit should be clearly separate from one national church's assembly or delegate session, and the registration form, program book, schedule and content should reflect that.
4. A future summit should include equal numbers of Canadian and U.S. planners and speakers.
5. A future summit should strive to do more than just achieve a balanced U.S.-Canadian turnout. Perhaps what should have been most noticeable was not the low U.S. participation but the lack of diversity in other regards (cultural and socioeconomic, to name two types).—*Peter Epp, a Canadian Mennonite in Portland, Ore.*

Will you hold me?

Sincere thanks to Michael King for his beautiful piece, "Will You Hold Me As I Held You?" (Real Families) in the Feb. 3 issue. This should be required reading for all of us.—*Harvey Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Review of *The Shack* misses the point

As I read the review of *The Shack* in the Jan. 20 issue (Mediaculture), I wondered about Gordon Houser's focus on the quality of the writing when obviously this book has proved its worth as inspirational reading for millions. In addition, having learned of the many tragedies that the author experienced, any Christian would only be humbled at William P. Young's ability to see God as completely loving, trustworthy and full of grace and equally inspired by his desire to share this truth with others.

Though I may have had some of my own issues with various aspects of this book, it did expand my

IN THIS ISSUE

With this issue we help launch a massive project initiated by Mennonite Church USA: health-care access for all our pastors. The planning for this effort began at the San José, Calif., biennial convention in 2007. This month, congregations will begin receiving information about the plan, and the planners hope for 700 congregations by Oct. 1. There is other news, as well. We report the endowment losses experienced by Mennonite Church USA colleges, universities and seminaries during their last fiscal year and the news that losses will be even worse this year (page 19). We have also been hearing that Mennonite young adults are increasingly interested in intentional faith communities; some current and former community members offer their counsel (page 20).—*Editor* understanding of the Trinity and God's astounding love for each of us. Though it doesn't answer the big questions of our suffering, the vivid portrayal of this God of goodness and love somehow helps quiet the soul of those who suffer.

Perhaps, as is stated in the book's forward, if what you take away from this book are things such as the quality of writing and theology issues, then this book may not have been written for you. I believe it is a book worth reading, especially for anyone who has struggled to reconcile this God of love with the tragedies that befall his children. *—Deborah Good, Harleysville, Pa.*

Bible can withstand competition

Regarding "*The Shack*: Simplistic, Didactic and Wildly Popular" (Jan. 20): Shame on you, Gordon Houser. Your snobbery is showing. True, *The Shack* is not particularly well-written. But there is a power in it that must be taken seriously. The imagery that William Paul Young uses seems to be allowing folks to think differently about and come closer to God. To dismiss it out of hand is to dismiss the possibility of engaging in some good faith conversations. The Bible can withstand the competition and may even benefit from it.*—Betsy Headrick McCrae, Lakewood, Colo.*

Editor's note: *With these letters we discontinue responses to Gordon Houser's Jan. 20 column.*

Developing a culture of call

One of the goals of Mennonite Church USA is to develop a "culture of call" for our youth and young adults. We are seeing the benefits of this as more and more young adults and youth are not only asking for their voices to be heard but are also asking to step into leadership in the church. As we look to the future together, I offer these suggestions:

1. Whenever possible, use the word "us" for Mennonite Church USA rather than for a subset within it. We are all a part of the denomination, and using our language wisely will help remind us of that.

2. We all need to be willing to be led. Young adults have a lot to offer the church. So do the adults and the older adults among us. Each of us needs to hear all the voices and honor the wisdom within them.

3. Be cognizant of the dynamics involved. Young adulthood in our society is by nature transient: It is how we go about finding our place in society. Congregations, on the other hand, are looking to sustain themselves for the long haul. Welcoming young adults into church leadership can bring great life and renewed energy. At the same time, it means there can be a high turnover of those who attend.

4. Mennonite Church USA will not look the same as it did in the past. The Mennonite church now does not look the same as it did when I was a child. Neither did my Mennonite experience match that of my parents, which did not look the same as each generation before them. If we indeed want to be a missional denomination, each generation needs to make the faith and church relevant to those around them.

As we work and serve together, I have great hope for the future of Mennonite Church USA. *—Rose Barber, Eugene, Ore.*

Pray for President Obama

A lady in the crowd talking to a reporter quoted the whole Bible verse at the presidential inauguration saying, "This is the day the Lord hath made, let us rejoice in it and be glad." She had it right. President Obama will have it right, too, when he has a Damascus Road experience like the leader Saul of Tarsus had, recorded in Acts 9. Then he will have a superior Savior instead of also catering to others who claim it. Indeed, let's pray that first for ourselves and then for his welfare. Some of us did that for President Bush when asked for it (1 Timothy 2:1,2).*—Willard A. Epp, Newton, Kan.*

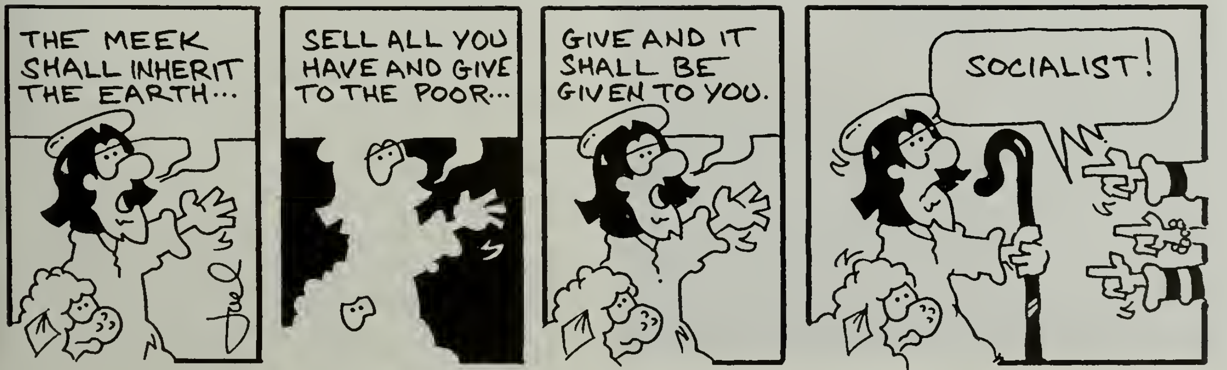
ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Mennonite Church USA should provide a way for all its pastors to have health insurance: (68 votes)

○ Yes (79%)
○ No (6%)
○ Not sure (15%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH...
SELL ALL YOU HAVE AND GIVE TO THE POOR...
GIVE AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN TO YOU.
SOCIALIST!

IN BRIEF

Benner *Canadian Mennonite* editor

Richard (Dick) Benner of Harrisonburg, Va., is the new editor/publisher of the *Canadian Mennonite*. Benner was the owner and publisher of a chain of weekly community newspapers for 13 years, was executive director for 11 years of Shalom Foundation, an organization publishing church print materials, and has taught journalism at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, for the past eight years. Dick and his wife, Marlene, are making plans to move from Harrisonburg to the Waterloo, Ont., area. Benner will succeed Tim Miller Dyck, the current editor. —*Canadian Mennonite*

Sex and seminary

A survey of 36 seminaries and rabbinical schools discovered that more than 80 percent do not require a full-semester course on sexuality for graduation and that two-thirds of them do not offer a course in sexuality issues for religious professionals. The study was sponsored by the Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing (www.religiousinstitute.org). —*The Christian Century*

Choice Books sells 5.55 million books in 2008

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Choice Books, an Anabaptist book evangelism ministry, set a new annual sales record by purchasing and selling 5,551,036 books in 2008, making 2008 the 23rd consecutive year of sales growth.

Originally organized as Life-Line Books in 1962, Choice Books first purchased and sold 1 million books in one year in 1991, celebrated the 2 million book milestone in 1997, surpassed the 3 million books in one year milestone in 1999, topped the 4 million book milestone in 2003 and reached 5 million books sold annually in 2006. At the current rate, Choice Books purchases and sells approximately 10 books per minute.

John M. Bomberger, Choice Books CEO, says, "We see God at work in the books we sell and praise him for the way the ministry continues to grow and make a difference in the lives of millions of people across the United States and beyond."

Choice Books' highest volume account in 2008 was HMSHost at the Charlotte Douglas International Airport, which sold 27,766 books, from 10 displays scattered throughout the airport.—*Choice Books*

22-year-old Mennonite victim to email fraud

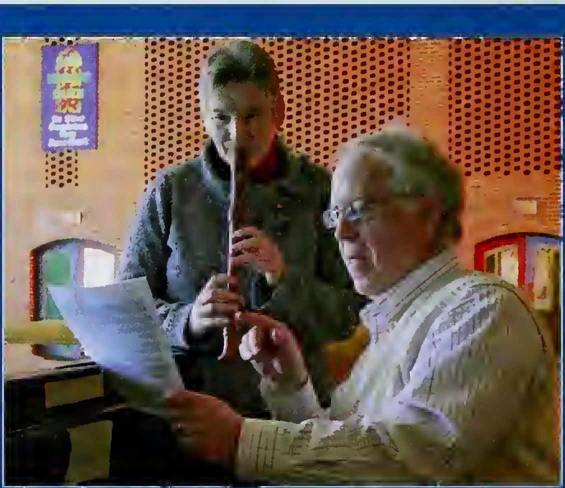
LEAMINGTON, Ont.—John Rempel of Leamington was bilked out of $150,000 in an email scam, which prompted church officials to respond.

Rempel, a 22-year-old Old Colony Mennonite, opened an email in 2007 that he thought would leave him set for life, after he was told that a distant relative in London, England, had died and left behind $12.8 million. The email was from someone claiming to be his late relative's attorney and couched his email in Christian terms, leading Rempel to believe they shared a faith in God.

Over the next year or so, Rempel was badgered into sending the scammer $150,000, starting with a request for $2,500 to cover "some fees," Rempel told CBC. "After that … it never stopped." He even flew to London, where he said he handed over $10,000 in cash behind a motel. When he ran out of his own money, he borrowed it from his parents and extended family members and friends.

Early this year, Rempel waited at a New York airport for the men and his money to arrive, but they never came. It was then that he contacted police. However, Leamington police Constable Kevin O'Neil told CBC News there isn't much investigators can do: "There's no doubt that they're probably not even using proper names, so to try to track these people down would be almost impossible."—*Canadian Mennonite*

photo provided



Lehman arranges song 'Iraqi Good Shepherd'

Glenn Lehman, right, arranged the words and music to an Iraqi song to express solidarity with those suffering from the war. Barb Musselman (left) plays the recorder part at Zion Mennonite Church, Souderton, Pa. Final permissions were obtained in February.—*Anna Groff*

MC USA youth will attend Paraguay 2009

STRASBOURG, France—Youth and young adults from Mennonite Church USA will attend the Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15 in Asunción, Paraguay, do a service project and visit parts of Peru. The young people were inspired by the 45 Ontario youth and leaders bound for Assembly 15 and encouraged by Richard Thomas, superintendent at Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School, says Jon Heinly, youth minister for LMS and Lancaster Mennonite Conference. He will co-lead the group with Cedric Roth, Franklin Mennonite Conference youth minister. By early February, applications from Alleghany, Atlantic Coast, Eastern District, Franklin, Franconia, Lancaster, New York and Virginia conferences had reached 18. Leaders are hoping to add a few more people, aged 17-29.—*Mennonite World Conference*

Soldiers kill Palestinian migrant worker

AT-TUWANI, West Bank—Three incidents indicate that Israeli occupation authorities are increasing aggression in the South Hebron Hills, particularly in response to Palestinian migrant laborers.

On Feb. 2, Israeli soldiers shot dead a Palestinian man on the Israeli side of the border near the Palestinian village of Jinba and the Israeli settlement of Beit Yatir. Taysir Manasra, 27, was attempting to travel into Israel for work.

The same day, Israeli soldiers set up a checkpoint on the Palestinian road from at-Tuwani to al-Birkeh. They stopped two Palestinian vehicles, removing and physically assaulting the drivers.

Larry Bartel

ston students perform gaúcha dance at festival
reía Dück (left) and Geverton Ost, students from Brazil, form the gaúcha dance at the 17th annual International ival at Hesston (Kan.) College Feb. 12.—*Hesston College*

On Feb. 3, Israeli soldiers arrested a Palestinian at his home in Mfagara, one kilometer southwest of at-Tuwani. They claimed that the van parked outside his home was not correctly registered.

The man, a well-known local peace activist, calmly agreed to go with the soldiers in order to settle the dispute. The soldiers handcuffed him, placed a black hood over his head, and drove him away in an army humvee.—*Christian Peacemaker Teams*

MCC helps provide food during Kenya drought

AKRON, PA.—Mennonite Central Committee is sponsoring the distribution of 26 tons of corn flour to nearly 4,000 people in a drought-stricken area of southern Rift Valley Province, Kenya. MCC provided $10,000 to a Kenyan partner organization, Maasai Integrated Development Initiatives, to purchase the flour and distribute it in Kajiado district. Most of the recipients herd livestock and are members of the Maasai tribe. In exchange for food, some residents of Kajiado are participating in community work projects organized by MIDI, including fencing fields, constructing roads, digging trenches for water pipes and building barriers to prevent erosion.—*MCC*

Mennonite Disaster Service lists urgent need

AKRON, Pa.—An experienced plumber is urgently needed to work at the Mennonite Disaster Service Dulzura, Calif., site. The project in Dulzura is all new construction. Other open positions include:

- March 28-April 4: Cook in Diamond, La.
- March 28-April 25: Assistant cook in Diamond
- March 28-April 25: Construction supervisor in Pass Christian, Miss.
- March 28-April 25: Office manager in Pass Christian
- March 28-April 25: Cook in Pass Christian

Project directors, construction supervisors, cooks and crew leaders are needed for the Summer Youth Projects (June and July) and College Internship Project (May and June) in Dulzura and the Gulf States. For information, call Sarah Yoder at 800-241-8111.—*MDS*

Bethel students build community with coffee

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—With a bit of fair trade coffee, tea, chocolate and some toppings, two freshmen at Bethel College, North Newton, are learning business as fledgling entrepreneurs.

Seth Dunn and Lisa Penner recently opened a makeshift coffee shop in the lounge of Haury Hall, a Bethel residence hall, to help increase the sense of student community. They invested their own money for supplies (the college has not yet provided funding) and are close to one-third of the way to paying for the products. A discussion with Bethel's student life office is planned, but the college has not yet taken an official position. Dunn and Penner would like to see the school take over the endeavor to provide a concrete community area and an opportunity for further student employment.—*Bethel College*

Goshen and Notre Dame offer dual degree

GOSHEN, Ind.—Goshen College and Notre Dame (Ind.) University have agreed to create a collaborative liberal arts and engineering program for undergraduates, similar to Goshen's prior agreements with the University of Illinois and Case Western Reserve University. Under this dual-degree program, a student takes three years of liberal arts and preparatory engineering courses at Goshen, followed by two years in Notre Dame's College of Engineering. Upon successfully completing the program, each student receives two degrees: a Bachelor of Arts degree in physics from Goshen and the Bachelor of Science in engineering degree from Notre Dame.—*Goshen College*

—*Compiled by Anna Groff*

IN BRIEF

Brunk named AMBS interim president

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., has named George R. Brunk, III, interim president. Brunk will begin July 19 and serve until a new president begins, a tenure anticipated to be six to 12 months. Brunk was vice president and academic dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., from 1979 to 1999. He joined the faculty of EMS in 1974, serving as professor of New Testament in addition to the administrative roles. He also has taught occasional courses at AMBS. —*AMBS*

China worker honored

Philip Bender was one of 24 English teachers, out of more than 2,000 in the Chengdu municipality, to receive a "2008 Excellent Foreign Teachers in Chongqing Award" on Dec. 18, 2008. Bender, whose position is facilitated by Mennonite Partners in China, serves through Mennonite Church Canada Witness and Mennonite Mission Network. Chongqing Medical University nominated him for the award. —*Mennonite Mission Network*

A fair balance

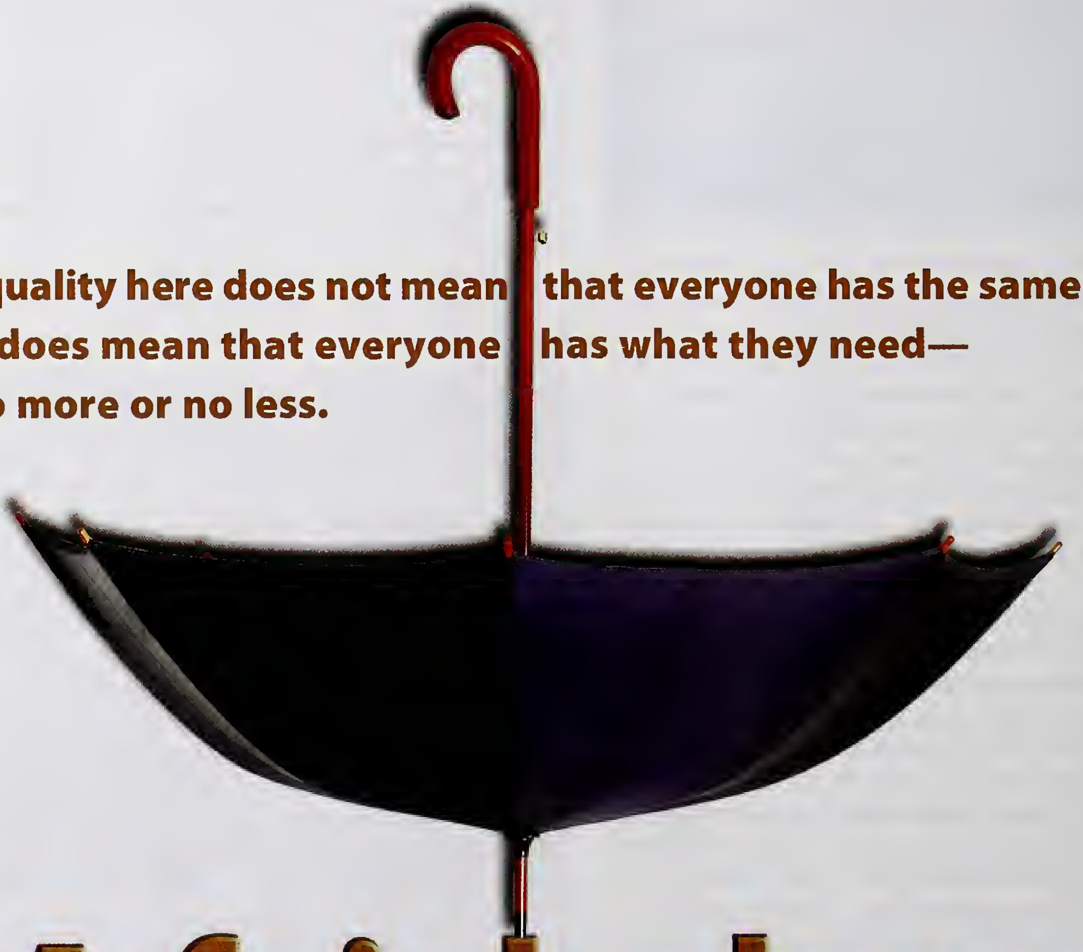
The Corinthian Plan draws from 2 Corinthians 8–9.

by Keith Harder

Scattered throughout the letters of Paul are references to a collection he initiated for distressed believers in Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians 8–9 Paul appeals to the Corinthians and other Gentile churches to respond to the material needs of their fellow believers in Jerusalem. In giving to the needs of the church in Jerusalem they would not only respond to their material needs but would also bear witness to the work of Christ in breaking down the wall between Jew and Gentile. In Paul's view, this collection was a sign of God's work in the world.

Paul begins his appeal in chapter 8 by lifting up the example of the believers in Macedonia who, he says, gave beyond their means in the midst of a "severe ordeal of affliction" (verse 2a). He says that "their abundant joy and their extreme poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity" (verse 2b).

The juxtaposition of abundance and joy with poverty and affliction is striking. How is it that those with little often seem more generous and joyful in their giving than those with more?



Equality here does not mean that everyone has the same. It does mean that everyone has what they need—no more or no less.

Apparently the Corinthians had made a commitment to give but were finding it hard to follow through. Paul uses the example of the Macedonians to challenge the Corinthians to give generously—to finish what they had started. He wants them to excel in their giving even as they excel in knowledge, speech and faith.

In verses 13-14, Paul talks about fair balance, or equality. "It is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance."

He reinforces this notion with a quote from Exodus 16 that recalls the daily provision of manna in the wilderness, when people received what they needed for that day. "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."

Equality here does not mean that everyone has the same. It does mean that everyone has what they need—no more or no less. According to Acts 4, this was the witness of the Jerusalem church, where it is said that "there was not a needy person among them."

Paul also says that in their giving they will also receive. The poor in Jerusalem also have something to share with the Corinthians. This is not one-way charity—it is mutual aid, material goods in exchange for nonmaterial benefits.

In chapter 9, Paul says he does not want the Corinthians to give out of a sense of obligation. He wants them to want to give. He wants them to give cheerfully, believing God will be honored by their giving and will bless their giving. Their giving glorifies God and will advance God's purposes in the world.

This Scripture has become a source of guidance and inspiration for those of us who have been working on ensuring health-care access for all Mennonite Church USA pastors in response to the will of the delegates to the Mennonite Church USA assembly in San José in 2007. The delegates passed a resolution that said: "As a denomination, we are committed in principle to providing basic health insurance for all eligible pastors. [And] we request the Executive Board to oversee the development and implementation of a plan whereby all congregations of Mennonite Church USA participate together in an arrangement that covers all of our pastors with basic health insurance."

This action was in response to the awareness that we have pastors serving Mennonite Church USA congregations that do not have adequate access to health care, partly because they do not have health insurance, the gateway to health care that most of us depend on. Delegates decided that together we needed to find a way to correct this inequity.

There was inequality in the early church that Paul was trying to redress, and there is inequality in the church today that we need to address.

Of course there are others besides pastors who do not have health insurance, which reflects the huge and growing gap between those with abundant material resources and those who have much more limited access to material resources and health care.

It is estimated that there are between 80 and 100 pastors currently without insurance in Mennonite Church USA and more who are at risk of losing the coverage they have.

This poses serious risks for many of these pastors and their families and in many cases compromises their ministries and the mission of their congregations.

We have heard about a pastor serving in Philadelphia who died some years ago because he could not get the care he needed. We know of several pastors in Los Angeles who did not have insurance who have been tested for prostate cancer and another who could not get the medical tests he needs because he did not have insurance.

We have met a Dallas pastor who incurred a large debt he is still paying on, in part because he had no health insurance. We know of pastors with preexisting conditions who will find it hard to find coverage if they lose the coverage they now have.

These stories seem to contradict the vision in 2 Corinthians 8 for a fair balance. This Scripture and others suggest that God did not intend that some have almost unlimited access to health care while others live off the crumbs that are left over. God did not intend that some easily access health care while others have to jump through a myriad of confusing hoops and go through interminable delays to access minimal health care. There was inequality in the early church that Paul was trying to redress, and there is inequality in the church today that we need to address.

Continued on page 10

Can we act together and go beyond our narrow self-interest to address the health-care needs of our pastors?

Continued from page 9

The problem of unequal access to health care is related to the problems in our nation's health-care system. Some ask why are we making an effort to address a symptom of this problem—uninsured pastors—and not advocating for an overhaul of the health-care system in our country?

Some delegates in San José said the fact that we have not been able to address the problems in our church compromises our witness on public policy related to health care. We have a problem that has a solution if we are willing to work at this together and if we are willing to share the cost.

In one sense, the problem of uninsured pastors is a microcosm of the problem we have in our country. The solution to the problem of uninsured pastors requires that we together share the cost of providing them with health insurance.

Addressing the larger problem of the insured in our country will also require a new way of sharing the cost of providing health care for all. Doing something about uninsured pastors could be a springboard to doing something about the needs of others in our church and beyond the church that currently do not have adequate access to health care.

Can we act together and go beyond our narrow self-interest to address the health-care needs of our pastors? Will we follow through on the commitment made by the church in San José in July 2007?

In 2 Corinthians 9 Paul makes his appeal primarily in terms of opportunity rather than obligation. He wants them to want to do this and to give cheerfully. He wants them to know they will be blessed both by the gifts of the Jerusalem believers but also by God. At one point (9:6) he says that as they find the grace to participate in this project they will be like farmers who sow bountifully and then bountifully reap the harvest of what they sowed.

We hope Mennonite Church USA congregations will catch the vision and take this opportunity to link arms and share health-care risks with other congregations. This is an opportunity to link arms in a tangible way to ensure that all our pastors have adequate access to health care. This is an opportunity to be the church in a new way and an old way.

And what harvest might we reap if we can find a way to do this? How might this create a new sense of connectedness and community? How might this help enliven our witness for justice and reconciliation, for breaking down barriers between those with abundant material resources and those with much less?

Imagine a church about which it is said there is not a needy person among them, or at least a church where it is said there is not a pastor among them without adequate access to health care.

May we catch the vision and embrace the challenge that Paul presented to the Corinthians. May God bless and guide our consideration of this opportunity.

Keith Harder is director of The Corinthian Plan.

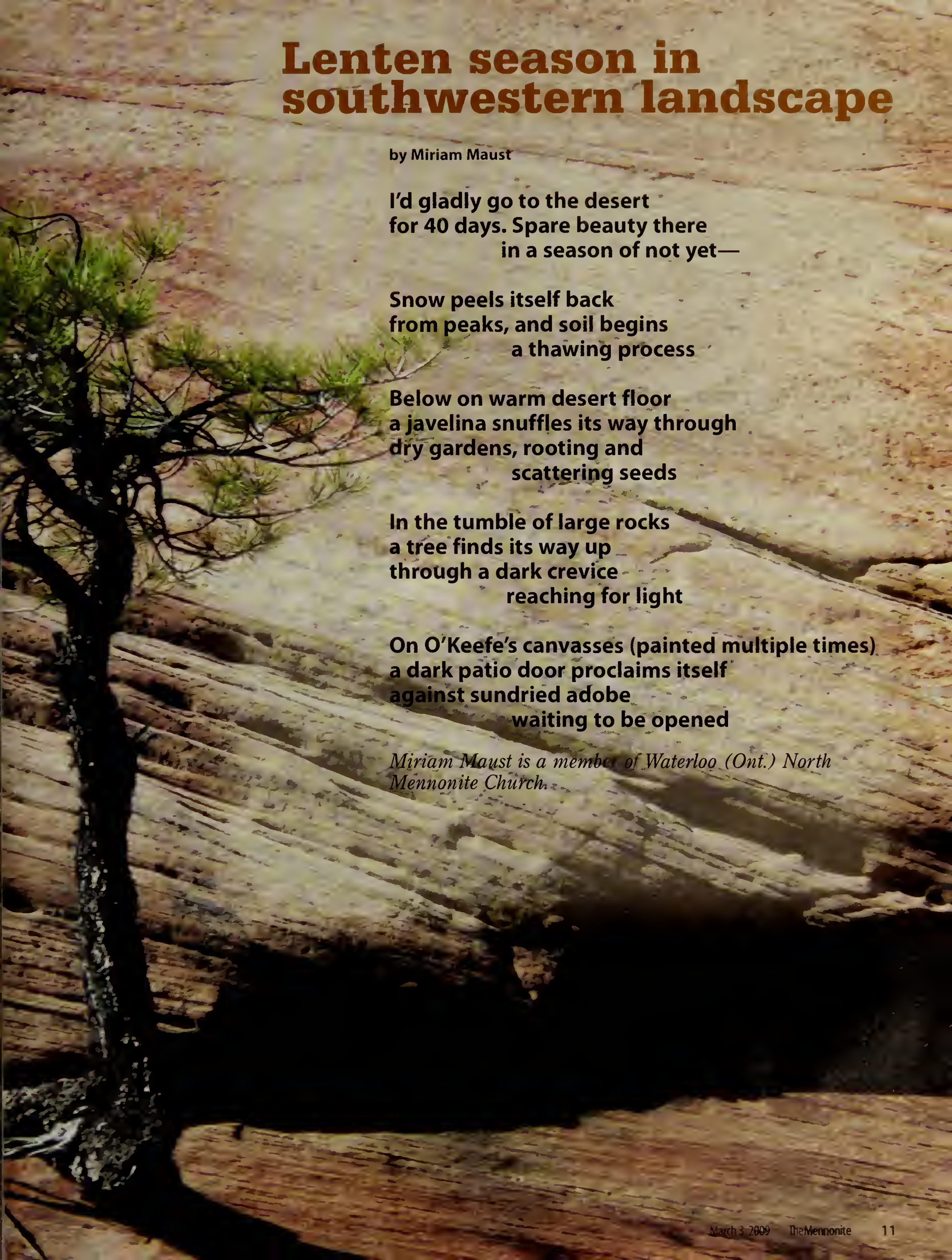
What The Corinthian Plan offers your congregation

The Corinthian Plan offers all congregations the opportunity to share in the giving and receiving of resources, just as Paul urged the sharing of resources in 2 Corinthians 8:14, "It is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need."

Practically speaking, sharing in this effort simplifies pastoral transitions—for your congregation as well as for pastoral candidates. It removes the question of health insurance benefits from the equation, freeing you to choose the best pastor to meet your needs and freeing the pastor to choose the congregation he or she feels lead to serve.

No matter how long your pastor has served your congregation and regardless of whether your congregation offers health insurance benefits now, The Corinthian Plan should be an important part of your congregation's commitment. This plan offers a long-range solution to needs you may have in the future—as well as enabling your congregation to participate in the community of congregations working together to see that all our pastors have access to health insurance and health care.

Ideally, every congregation in Mennonite Church USA will join in this effort, witnessing to our shared interest in supporting leadership development and growing congregations.



Lenten season in southwestern landscape

by Miriam Maust

I'd gladly go to the desert
for 40 days. Spare beauty there
in a season of not yet—

Snow peels itself back
from peaks, and soil begins
a thawing process

Below on warm desert floor
a javelina snuffles its way through
dry gardens, rooting and
scattering seeds

In the tumble of large rocks
a tree finds its way up
through a dark crevice
reaching for light

On O'Keefe's canvasses (painted multiple times)
a dark patio door proclaims itself
against sundried adobe
waiting to be opened

Miriam Maust is a member of Waterloo (Ont.) North Mennonite Church.

Blessed insu

Stories of pastors needing healt

by Madelyn Metzger

www.sxc.hu

J.P. Masih

Doctors sometimes fear seeing people who don't have insurance. ... Or they aren't as serious about their diagnosis. —J. P. Masih

For a small ethnic congregation, health insurance a struggle

Pastor J.P. Masih's calling to the ministry came when he was a child in India. "After college, I joined the ministry in the Mennonite Church in India right away," he says.

He has come to the Asian Mennonite Community Church in Aurora, Ill. "Our congregation is very small," J.P. says—so small they can't afford to pay for pastoral health insurance.

"Members of our church tend to be in two congregations at the same time—an English-speaking congregation and an ethnic congregation," says J.P. "They may also have connections with their churches back in India. So their tithes and offerings are divided."

Lacking health insurance can be difficult for J.P. and his family. "Doctors sometimes fear seeing people who don't have insurance," he says. "Or they aren't as serious about their diagnosis." And though J.P.'s family has taken advantage of a charitable hospital located two hours away, the cost of travel and parking in order to reach this health care can be prohibitive.

The Corinthian Plan could help the Asian Mennonite Community Church—and other small congregations—provide health coverage for pastors such as J.P. "We could then have health coverage, at least for emergencies," he says. "It would definitely be a benefit."

Freeman Miller

An answer to a prayer

"Health coverage for our pastors is a serious concern," says Freeman Miller, Bishop of Lancaster Mennonite Conference—a conference diverse in location, size and cultures. At almost 300 years old, Lancaster Conference has planted churches around the world, including Asia, Africa and Latin America.

"Many of our established congregations are pretty financially stable," says Freeman. "But many of the newer congregations ... are small and struggling, especially those in urban areas."

That financial struggle often results in pastors going without health insurance. The conference once hired a pastor from the Philippines to serve a U.S.-based congregation. "He didn't immediately get health insurance," says Freeman. "Soon after he came, he became quite ill. We discovered he had a number of serious health issues. The small church of about 30-40 members soon inherited a huge hospital bill." The pastor became so sick he returned to the Philippines, where he eventually passed away.

Freeman supports The Corinthian Plan because it could be beneficial for young congregations that can't afford to cover their pastors. "Anything that helps get our pastors health coverage—where the haves and the have-nots join hands in mutual aid—would certainly be welcome," he says. "If the larger, established congregations help carry the younger churches, it would be the answer to the prayer that we're looking for."

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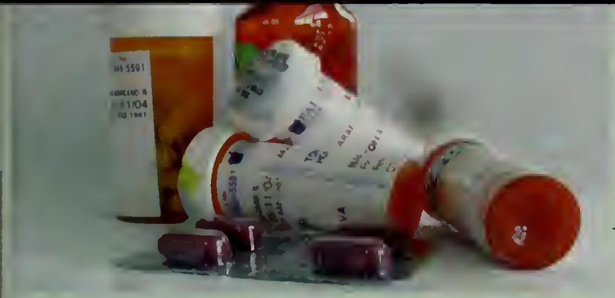

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Together in the kingdom of God

Marco Guete

Of the 15 Mennonite Church USA congregations in Texas, 10 of them use Spanish as their primary language during worship, according to Marco Guete, conference minister for the Texas churches in Western District Conference.

"The majority of the congregations are first-generation members with first-generation pastors," says Marco. And though most of the Spanish-speaking pastors are bivocational, none of them has health insurance.

"Usually the congregations provide some sort of stipend to cover doctor visits and medications," says Marco. "For example, one of the congregations gives the pastor about $1,600 a year to be used at the pastor's discretion. But others have different amounts, and some don't have any amount in the budget."

When in need of health care, many of the pastors go to hospitals serving low-income patients. But because they earn more than the poverty level, the pastors sometimes don't qualify for medical-expense assistance. Some pastors go across the border to Mexico and others to the emergency room when they need health services.

Marco believes The Corinthian Plan will provide a much-needed solution for the pastors in his conference—and promote stewardship between Mennonite congregations of all sizes and needs.

"The Corinthian Plan ... is mutual aid [among] everybody," says Marco. "It's about working and living together in the kingdom of God."

Taking the leap of faith

When it comes to starting a new congregation, church planters and pastors can face any number of obstacles. Health insurance is one of them.

"Most of the pastors or church planters are bivocational and like working so they can have benefits," says Kuaying Teng, Mennonite Mission Network minister of Asian ministries. "When they're thinking about moving to an urban area [to plant a new church], there's a big concern about medical and health insurance."

The reason for the concern is that insurance is not readily affordable for small, upstart congregations. The result: individuals can be turned off from church planting because health insurance is an issue.

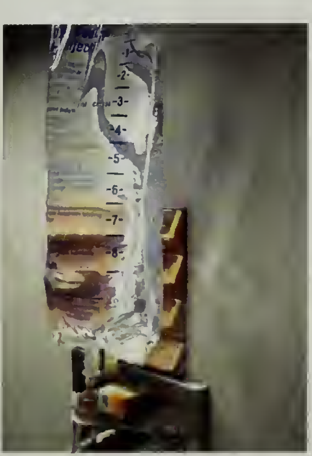
Church planters have a difficult balancing act between answering God's call to the ministry and providing for family needs, says Kuaying. That's why it can be especially difficult for church planters with other jobs to take the leap of faith.

Kuaying Teng

"Being bivocational doesn't help them fully engage with the ministry," says Kuaying. "Support from congregations and conferences would help." Church planters and pastors could then answer the call and still have some financial stability, should a medical need arise.

The Corinthian Plan is very important, says Kuaying. "It's something that is needed."

Church planters have a difficult balancing act between answering God's call to the ministry and providing for family needs. —Kuaying Teng



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Listening to the Holy Spirit

Sam Thomas

Sam Thomas is grateful for his health insurance. Currently serving as bishop of Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference, Sam has worked for—and had health coverage through—the church for his entire adult life. And it's because of his health coverage that he didn't have to worry about medical expenses when he battled cancer twice—first in 1978 and again in 1995.

"I was insured all along," says Sam. "If I didn't have my insurance, I'd be in trouble."

Sam can't help but think of other pastors and church leaders who have to face medical problems and expenses without the help of insurance.

"I'm one of the grateful ones who fully support a mutual aid kind of plan," says Sam. "It provides opportunities for people like me who would not otherwise be insurable."

For Sam, The Corinthian Plan conjures up thoughts about the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost, when "all who believed were together and had all things in common" (Acts 2:44).

"There was not a needy person among them," says Sam. "How can we talk about the Holy Spirit being there without talking about caring for one another?"

That's why The Corinthian Plan is such a blessing.

"I want to give to others to help provide health coverage," says Sam. "Providing for people who have preexisting conditions and people whose congregations can't afford health insurance—it feels good to be a part of helping others."

Serving through lean times

Victor Vargas is no stranger to going without health insurance. The pastor of Iglesia Mennonita Pentecostes, Woodburn, Ore., has not had health insurance in over a decade. It's made for some lean times for Victor and his family—especially considering his wife is not only a cancer survivor but struggling with a neck injury stemming from an accident 15 years ago.

"All our money goes to paying medical bills," says Victor.

During his wife's cancer treatment, the couple's medical bills were paid by a charitable program. But Victor doesn't qualify for similar assistance—he's making too much money between his pastorate and working part-time as conference minister for Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference (PNMC). And even though Victor is 65 years old, he doesn't have enough credits to be eligible for Social Security benefits.

Fortunately, PNMC does provide Victor with some money for catastrophic coverage.

"I am healthy, and I don't need doctors right now," Victor says. "So I save the money to pay for physicals."

Victor knows he's not the only Mennonite pastor who could benefit from The Corinthian Plan. "It would be helpful for a lot of pastors," he says—pastors trying to serve and build the church while also tending to their health needs.

All our money goes to paying medical bills.— Victor Vargas

www.sxc.hu

How a mosquito put everything into perspective

A simple mosquito bite took Pastor Jeff Wintermote from a healthy adult to someone facing over $.25 million in health expenses.

That mosquito bite infected Jeff with the West Nile Virus, which evolved into Guillain-Barré Syndrome, an autoimmune disease that, if left untreated, causes gradual paralysis of the entire body.

"It paralyzes from your feet and works its way up your body," Jeff says. "When it gets to your diaphragm … you can't breathe any longer."

Jeff was in the hospital for six weeks—two of those weeks in intensive care.

"We knew the medical bills were going to be outrageous," he says. But all Jeff ended up paying was his health plan's deductible. The rest of his medical bills and related expenses were paid, thanks to negotiations made on his behalf by the insurance company and the generosity of his congregation and community.

Jeff Wintermote

Jeff and his family have since moved to a different Mennonite congregation in a different state. Fortunately, his health plan transferred with him. That's one of the reasons Jeff supports The Corinthian Plan.

"I'm a strong believer in mutual aid," he says. "If congregations can see that this is really a part of who we are as a Mennonite people—as believers in mutual aid—maybe we can make this work in a better way that's affordable for more congregations."

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Trying not to burden the church

Constanzo and Marcello Aguirre used to have health insurance, until they were called to serve as pastors of Centro Cristiano Vida Abundante in Aurora, Ill.

"The church doesn't have the funds to pay for insurance," says Constanzo.

Centro Cristiano Vido Abundante is a growing congregation of about 150 people—many of whom are recent immigrants. Had the church used what little funds they were able to raise on health insurance, "we would probably just barely be making it," says Marcello.

Accessing health care has been tricky for the married co-pastors.

"We go to a hospital that is close by and get our checkups," says Marcello. "We try not to burden the church with that." But when it comes to more costly procedures, the couple tries to get those taken care of when they visit their congregationally supported missionary in Mexico.

Constanzo and Marcello believe The Corinthian Plan could help them and other pastors trying to find creative ways to take care of their health needs.

"I believe The Corinthian Plan will help," says Marcello. "We would contribute funds to the program … [and] it does sound like something we can afford."

Medical costs and mutual aid

Darrell Baer knows how a medical problem can change a life in an instant. The conference minister for Franklin Mennonite Conference, Darrell recently suffered from an unexpected and life-threatening brain hemorrhage.

"It struck suddenly—really only five minutes from being in good health until I was in big trouble," says Darrell. After two emergency operations and extended hospital stays, Darrell was on the mend.

Then the $160,000 of medical bills began rolling in. Darrell's health insurance covered $100,000, leaving him responsible for the remaining $60,000. But Darrell's medical burden turned out to be a story of mutual aid and Christian love.

A medical billing professional from a congregation in Franklin Conference agreed (with proper authorization) to take over all the accounting on Darrell's medical bills.

"She negotiated for me and got the $60,000 liability reduced to $28,000," says Darrell. "That was wonderful."

A deacon in Franklin Conference also raised money from other church members to cover the costs.

"People came to my rescue," says Darrell. "The bills were all paid."

Darrell believes The Corinthian Plan is a way to provide health coverage while also helping our brothers and sisters in Christ when medical needs arise.

"We're foolish to think we don't need it," says Darrell, "because in five minutes, any of us could be vulnerable."

Continued on page 16

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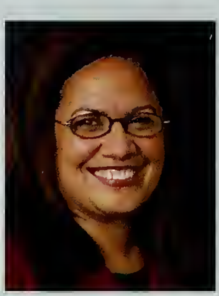


Juanita Nuñez

A life investment

This is a great opportunity for pastors to get coverage. —Juanita Nuñez

Juanita Nuñez, moderator of Iglesia Menonita Hispana, and her husband, Eligio, were fortunate to escape serious injury in a December 2006 car accident. But the experience brought them face-to-face with their vulnerability.

The couple doesn't have health insurance. The main reason for going without coverage is the financial situation of the congregation they co-pastor, Ebenezer Christian Church in Apopka, Fla.

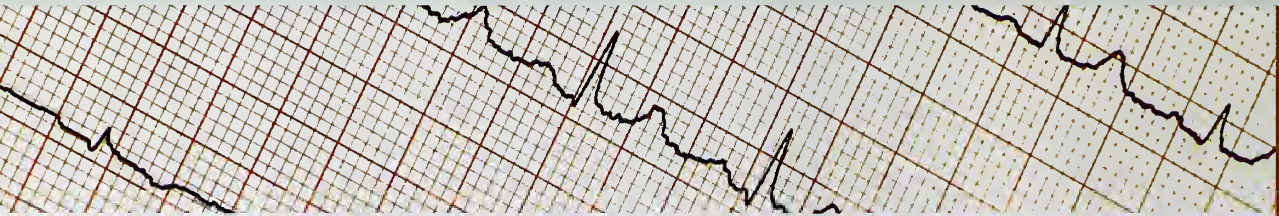
"Even though we have 80 members, some of our people are low-income," says Juanita. "They have a hard time paying for coverage."

Juanita and Eligio try to live healthy lives. For the past 25 years, they've gone to a community health clinic that bills patients according to income.

"We try to get our regular checkups done, and we go to the dentist every year," says Juanita. "We take care of ourselves."

But even those who are responsible stewards of their health can find themselves in unforeseen situations, such as the Nuñez's car accident. Juanita believes The Corinthian Plan is vitally important because many Hispanic and other ethnic leaders in the denomination don't have insurance.

"We work hard for the church and the kingdom and invest our lives in the ministry," says Juanita. "This is a great opportunity for pastors to get coverage."



To whom much is given, much is expected

Community. That's what brought Greg Lacher and his wife to the Blooming Glen (Pa.) Mennonite Church 35 years ago.

The couple, who had not grown up with an Anabaptist background, had recently moved and was searching for a faith community.

"The sense of community we experienced immediately was something unique," Greg says. "We were drawn to the closeness."

It's that feeling of community that excites Greg about the broader Mennonite church—specifically the dynamic and growing multicultural congregations within the denomination.

But Greg, a semiretired financial services and insurance professional, also understands the realities that many of these smaller ethnic congregations are facing.

"There are pastors who don't have health insurance," Greg says, "yet they're a vibrant part of the church."

Larger, more established congregations such as Blooming Glen don't have to worry about health insurance. The 725-member congregation employs nine people, and staff members are covered under a group health plan. Yet Blooming Glen is willing to participate in a denomination-wide health plan, such as The Corinthian Plan, in order to help support the broader church.

"Blooming Glen adheres to the saying, 'To whom much is given, much is expected,'" says Greg. "We have a generous spirit of helping others."

Greg Lacher

There are pastors who don't have health insurance, yet they're a vibrant part of the church. —Greg Lacher

Terry Shue

Living out our values

The face of Mennonite Church USA is changing. More and more people from varied spiritual and cultural backgrounds are feeling called to join and participate in Mennonite congregations.

"It's enriched the church in many ways," says Terry Shue, pastor of Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church. "And it is also a constant opportunity to teach who we are and our values as a church committed to Anabaptist principles."

Kidron Mennonite, a 70-year-old congregation with a history of connecting with the work of the larger church, is committed to reaching out to new members while also sharing their core values.

That's why Terry is excited about The Corinthian Plan.

"It's a possibility for us, as a denomination, to practice and continue to teach—as we've taught all along—the principle of mutual aid," he says.

Terry feels The Corinthian Plan is a huge opportunity for the Mennonite Church. Not only will it provide health coverage for pastors and church staff participating in the plan throughout the denomination, but "it's going to give a commentary on who we are as a people—our commitment to mutual aid, our ability to stand together," says Terry.

"Ultimately, it's not about insurance. It's about theology. It's about living out our values in a real, practical way."

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It can't be right that we're brothers and sisters in Christ, and one has so much and one has so little.—Rod Stafford

Widening the circle

Rod Stafford

Portland (Ore.) Mennonite Church is accustomed to reaching out. The congregation started as a mission 85 years ago, providing outreach programs for children and Portland area neighborhoods. In the 1960s, Anabaptist men fulfilling their 1-W alternative service came to the area, started families, and settled down—and the mission became a church.

Today the congregation is just one of three English-speaking Mennonite congregations in the Portland area, according to Rod Stafford, Portland Mennonite's pastor.

"Often an English-speaking church and Spanish-speaking church share a facility," says Rod—a relationship he knows well, since his congregation shares space with Ministerias Restaurcion. And in building relationships with his colleagues, Rod has noticed some inequities.

"I get a full salary, fringe benefits and the full health coverage for me and my family," says Rod. But he's certain some of his Spanish-speaking colleagues can't say the same.

"The inequities are evident and personal," says Rod. "It can't be right that we're brothers and sisters in Christ, and one has so much and one has so little."

That's why the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference took steps to set up a task force, pool resources and begin subsidizing some pastoral health costs.

It's no surprise, then, that The Corinthian Plan feels like a move in the right direction.

"We're really heartened by the denomination's efforts," says Rod. "It's a way of widening the circle of coverage to include pastors who are uninsured or are difficult to insure. It's a central commitment of ours for mutual aid."

Focus on environmental education

Andrew L. Clouse serves in Honduras with Mennonite Central Committee.

The image in the Honduras newspaper *La Prensa* was haunting: a man in a flooded street in one of Honduras' poorer neighborhoods holds his lifeless toddler against his chest. The child was one of 29 people killed by flooding and mud slides after Tropical Depression 16 parked itself over Honduras for almost a week last October. People in Honduras think something is awry with the climate. My neighbor said: "The climate is all out of order. Our summers are longer, and the winters are much wetter"—an analysis consistent with what experts have been saying for years about the effects of global warming.

Climate change is already devastating the poor. This is a justice issue. For too long, we humans—Christians included—have considered ourselves outside nature, with the odd idea that our negative influence on the environment will have no effect on us. We have forgotten our roots in God's creation, the Garden of Eden. The day of environmental reckoning may arrive sooner than we think.

Living in a more environmentally sustainable way begins with changing our personal actions. Our economy may have conditioned us to endlessly pursue the accumulation of stuff, but as Christians we are called to live a simple life. The way we spend our money reflects our Christian faith, and our consumer choices have a major impact on the environment. An issue of *The New Internationalist* said all the plastic we use, such as water bottles, televisions, packaging and disposable plates, end up somewhere—often the oceans, where it chokes sea turtles, leaches chemicals and clogs islands.

Another example is food. When we buy industrial beef at the grocery store or a restaurant, we support a system that inefficiently uses oil and water, fattens animals on unnatural hormones, encourages the strengthening of bacteria through the rampant use of antibiotics, and pollutes water systems with runoff from the cattle's waste.

We don't change our habits because we are used to the way things are. We have been too complacent for too long, and now is the time to do something about it. But what? I can easily become paralyzed by fear. There is nothing I can do to stop the building of another coal-fired power plant in India or the destruction of the Amazon rain forest. But paralysis means being inactive, and that is the opposite of what God commands us.

Proverbs 31:8-9 says: "Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy." This mandate applies not only to the poor but to the earth, destroyed in the name of economic progress. It's particularly human to think God's creation cannot speak for itself. The polar ice caps are melting at an alarming rate; honey bee colonies around the world are dying mysteriously; cholera outbreaks are more common; drinking water in much of the world is scarce; the ocean's dead zones are bigger every year. These are clear cries for help—signs that the environment is in trouble. But I'm afraid they fall on deaf ears.

Let us in the church who have ears hear. Christians must be advocates for God's creation. And what better place for the formation of this cloud of witnesses than in the Mennonite church, already rooted in the principles of peaceful relationship with the world? Advocating for the environment means speaking up not only for creation but for the impoverished, as the world's poor are the first and hardest hit by the effects of climate change. We must learn that we are all connected through a complex yet fragile ecosystem. The way we treat the environment is how we treat others.

People will change, but they can't unless they have information. At Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., I was part of a Simply in Season elective Sunday school class in which concerned brothers and sisters gathered to talk about how faith affects choices about food. This is just one example of how we can approach environmental sustainability as the body of Christ, from toddlers to elders. Mennonite Church USA should make environmental education a priority, with sermons, Sunday school curriculum and prayer resources to help its members make wise consumer choices and understand how their actions affect others and God's creation. Through the support of each other and by the grace of God, we can change how we treat the world God has given us. TM

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Mennonites in Paraguay**—Edgar Stoesz
- **Helga Dueck**—Katherine Arnoldi

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of *The Mennonite*, the board for The Mennonite, Inc., or Mennonite Church USA.

Endowment losses hit MC USA schools

Bethel, Hesston colleges report additional losses since June 2008 reports.

Mennonite Church USA colleges, universities and seminaries all suffered losses to their investment portfolios as of June 30, 2008. But the economic recession made matters worse in the months after their fiscal years ended. The situations at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., and Hesston (Kan.) College drew the attention of the *Newton Kansan* in a Feb. 13 article by Cristina Janney. Hesston reported additional losses to their endowment. According to the article, 35 percent of the school's $10 million endowment has disappeared in the current economic meltdown.

Bethel College is also having to respond to economic losses. Bethel has made budget cuts; decreased travel; instituted a weeklong, mandatory, unpaid leave for staff over Christmas break and asked employees and Bethel board members to make greater donations to the college.

From July 1 to Nov. 30, 2008, Bethel lost more than $4 million, around 30 percent of its endowment. According to Bethel president Barry Bartel, the college draws on that endowment for operations expenses. The college has transferred some money out of endowment into liquid assets, so it is difficult to compare the current value of the endowment. However, Bartel says the losses have continued to mount since last November.

The college was forced to cut $330,000 from its $10 million general operating budget this school year. Next year, the school is looking to cut $700,000 to $800,000 from its general fund budget.

In addition to the loss of its investment income, Bethel saw a decline in enrollment for the 2008-09 school year. The college had an increase in its freshman class, but transfers were down, resulting in a decline from 540 to 500 students. Bartel says he appointed a task force last fall to work on "enhanced recruitment of transfer students," and he's hopeful that will make a difference.

Mennonite Education Agency released the audited statements for all higher education schools on Feb. 11. Those results show that Goshen (Ind.) College had a realized loss of $2,245,942 and unrealized loss of $23,416,372 as of June 30, 2008. On Feb. 12, Jim Histand, vice president for finance, explained the situation.

"Goshen's reported figures," Histand said, "will be substantially more volatile from both a realized and unrealized gain/loss perspective than the other Mennonite colleges, due to the much larger endowment and investment portfolio we have as well as Lilly Foundation grant-related activities. In good years for the financial markets, our numbers will go way up, but in down years in the financial markets, our numbers will go way down comparatively."

Accounting for the school's Center for Intercultural Teaching and Learning (CITL) also contributed to Goshen's losses.

"Two years ago we received the $12.5 million grant from Lilly Endowment for CITL," Histand said, "but last year was the first full year of operations of the grant. The year those grant funds came in they were recorded as a substantial income item. But then in subsequent years, as those grant funds are expended, they go out as expense without income recorded in that year to offset the expense since it was already recorded earlier."

Realized losses in the chart below are actual reductions in an institution's net assets. Unrealized losses are the amount the institution would have lost if the investments were sold as of June 30, 2008.—*Gordon Houser and Everett Thomas*

Goshen's reported figures will be substantially more volatile ... than the other Mennonite colleges.
—Jim Histand

Acronyms in chart (below): AMBS is Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. EMU is Eastern Mennonite University and Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

June 30, 2008, financial reports for MC USA colleges, universities and seminaries

	Revenue/gains	Expenses	Realized gain (loss)[1]	Unrealized gain (loss)[2]	Change in assets
AMBS	$6,837,745	6,731,536	106,209	(2,514,507)	(2,408,298)
Bethel	$11,737,505	12,621,864	(884,359)	(985,947)	(1,870,306)
Bluffton	$24,198,594	21,987,626	2,210,968	(2,681,334)	(470,366)
EMU	$29,967,662	28,708,548	1,259,114	(3,812,847)	(2,553,733)
Goshen	$27,783,766	30,029,708	(2,245,942)	(21,170,430)	(23,416,372)
Hesston	$11,151,690	10,043,476	1,108,214	(1,398,923)	(290,709)

[1] Change in net assets before unrealized gains (losses) [2] Unrealized investment gains (losses), actuarial adjustments, and changes in value of split interest agreements

Source: Mennonite Education Agency

Mennonite young adults show renewed interest in intentional communities

While covering young adult conferences and retreats, assistant editor Anna Groff heard some Mennonite young adults express interest in intentional faith communities. Her assignment was to interview current and former members of several communities and ask them to reflect on their experiences.—*Editor*

Virgil Vogt has been a member at Reba Place Fellowship, an intentional Christian community in Evanston, Ill., for 45 years. He serves as associate conference minister for Illinois Mennonite Conference. Throughout the past four decades, Vogt has observed changing attitudes toward intentional communities. In recent years, he has met many young people interested in radical expressions of Christianity. In the 1970s, many people showed an interest in communal living, but that diminished in the 1980s and 1990s, he says.

Virgil Vogt

The intensity and closeness revealed things about me that I didn't necessarily know were there.
—Keith Harder

"Suddenly, through various means," he says, "that broader interest [in intentional communities] is certainly strong throughout the country."

This interest impacts Reba Place, as the involvement of young people in recent years has increased. Many of the young people that join Reba want to learn from and be part of a Christian community that has roots, he says. Some stay for a short time before they move on, and some have interest in starting their own communities.

"If people could arrange to actually live here for a few years … you learn so much more [by] being there all the time," Vogt says. "Of course, there's so much to be learned about how to get along with each other. We [at Reba] still have a lot to learn."

Vogt says the church should have various options to fit various people, while maintaining faithful priorities.

"It's more challenging from a leadership standpoint to make sure all these diversities are working together and people are generally moving in the right direction," he says, "but God helps us greatly through that with the power of the Holy Spirit."

Rich Foss joined Plow Creek Fellowship, an intentional church and community in Tiskilwa, Ill., with Sarah, his wife, in 1977. Plow Creek began in 1971. Foss sees similarities in young people today interested in intentional communities and himself years ago. In 1974, he and a group of friends went to Reba Place seeking advice on starting a community. One person told them, "We used to encourage the starting of communities, but people should [just] join one."

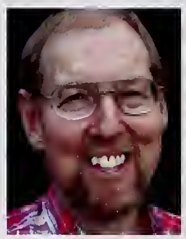
Foss says, "We did not heed their advice and promptly started our own."

Foss relates it to the parable of the seed sower. Of the communities starting today, "one in five will end up on good ground, take roots and become a [vital] community."

But Foss sees the value in young people. The age of most people in the community is from the late-50s to the mid-80s."We have found a way to be a community," he says, "that works for people who came of age in the 1950s and the Baby Boomer generation. Our challenge is to figure out how to be a community that also works for the next generations."

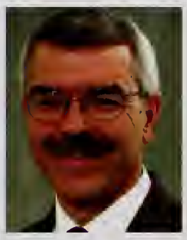
One example of that effort is the People Against Poverty and Apathy festival that Plow Creek hosted last year. Most of the 800 participants were young adults, he says.

"Over the years, we've just become a lot more humble about our role in the kingdom of God," Foss says. "We feel called to be faithful … but at the same time realize that we are a small part [of the kingdom]."


Rich Foss

Three times a year, Foss takes a guided retreat with two mentors—one man and one woman. "It's given me a source of strength as I've tried to serve the Lord in leadership at Plow Creek," he says. "I would really recommend, especially to leaders, that they need to develop a pattern of spending time with the Lord and with Scripture."

Keith Harder lived at Fellowship of Hope (FOH), Elkhart, Ind., with Judy, his wife, as part of the original group until 1985. Harder now serves as Healthcare Access for Church Workers project director for Executive Leadership. Harder has good memories of his 16 years at FOH. Those years "created many wonderful moments and memories that I will always cherish," he says. And with those memories came valuable lessons: people experience community differently, and people's motivations for wanting to be part of a community differ, Harder says.


Keith Harder

Another challenge is leadership issues. FOH hoped to be egalitarian, but as it grew and became

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

Older adults who have 'been there, done that' give advice: Be flexible, make space for yourself and consider forming an intergenerational group.

more complex, the need for leadership became more evident, he says.

"The clash between idealism and the reality of our human condition was challenging," he says.

Keith functioned in a leadership role for most of his time with FOH, In retrospect, he says, he did not consistently exercise that leadership in the best ways. However, it was a time for healing and learning about himself, for example, his desire for control in situations.

"I learned a lot about myself because of the degree of vulnerability," he says, "and the degree of openness required me, and I think others, to let the light shine into parts of our lives that we didn't necessarily anticipate. ... The intensity and closeness revealed things about me that I didn't necessary know were there."

Alice Goertz was a member of Fellowship of Hope with Henry, her late husband, from 1974 to 1980.

"A hothouse environment" is how Goertz describes living in an FOH "extended household," in which each resident had roles for household routines. "There was abundant opportunity," she says, "to ask the Lord for help in learning to adapt, share and grow in love."

Henry and Alice spent nearly two years in an extended household, the other years in single family homes. Alice says she joined mostly because of Henry's desire to explore Christian community.

"There were pressures to compromise, conform and accommodate to a variety of personalities in a confined space," she says. "In my experience, the stronger personalities were more likely to thrive in this type of lifestyle. There were many common activities and often not much time or space for a shy introvert to regroup."

Alice Goertz

Other challenges included the strongly hierarchical leadership that made practical and spiritual decisions for the entire group.

"The members who did not have as much input into the decision-making process could feel 'less than,' as so many of their life choices were made by others," she says. "The members who felt committed to living in this kind of church community were better able to accept and adapt to these structures. At times I sensed an attitude among some members that those living in 'community' were a bit better than Christians who did not."

Taking care of the toddlers with other women was a highlight for Goertz. But children also contributed to some complex dynamics at FOH.

"Our lives in extended household became increasingly more complicated as the young couples living there became parents," she says. "Issues surrounding children's behaviors and acceptable discipline strategies can generate a certain amount of heat and consume a lot of time in processing among those living closely with families."

Aside from any challenges, Goertz says she is grateful she has been able to maintain "positive and precious relationships" with other FOH members from the years they were involved.

Linda and Dana Miller were members of Ixthus Fellowship, a student group at Goshen (Ind.) College in the early 1970s. Ixthus Fellowship was one of the groups that joined to form Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen in 1974. Linda says Ixthus functioned like a family where people knew her more than anyone other than her nuclear family.

Linda, Dana Miller

However, Linda would recommend forming a more intergenerational group, if starting one today. "We all grew tremendously," she says, "but it wasn't without hardships." Dana likened joining a community to a marriage. "As you get older, you realize the complexity of human relationships," he says. "Going into it again, I would go with as much gentleness as I could muster, assuming forgiveness will be the highest priority."

Linda offers several practical suggestions, recommending that housing situations offer personal space and time. Another decision to keep in mind is the group's diet. When grocery shopping for Ixthus, it became a competition to see how little one could spend on food. Linda admits the group did not eat very healthily. "Know who you are and what is good for you," she says.—*Anna Groff*

> Going into it again, I would go with as much gentleness as I could muster ... assuming forgiveness will be the highest priority.
> —Dana Miller

What should I know before joining an intentional community?

1. Be ready for disappointment. People will disappoint each other.
2. It is difficult to live up to our best intentions, so there must be grace and forgiveness.
3. Strive to live in unity in a way that does not compromise the uniqueness of individuals.
4. Economics is not the most difficult area; relationships is.
5. Find trusted points of reference outside the community.
6. Be intentional about integrating play and work.

—Keith Harder

Pastors Week explores 'new old church'

At AMBS, Diana Butler Bass shares the practices that lead to vital churches.

Mary E. Klassen

Diana Butler Bass, AMBS Pastors Week presenter, talks with Carole Ricketts, pastor of Michigan State University Mennonite Fellowship, East Lansing, Mich.

Diana Butler Bass, Christian sociologist and researcher, helped more than 200 participants imagine a "new old church" during Pastors Week Jan. 26-29 at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind.

Bass, author of *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, spent three years doing in-depth research of 50 congregations in mainline denominations to learn how they found vitality and growth in spite of trends of decline. Her journey to this project began with the congregation where she worshiped several years ago, Trinity Episcopal Church in Santa Barbara, Calif. Over five years, the congregation grew several times over and raised enough funds to renovate its old building to meet new state earthquake codes.

"We had saved Trinity, but at the same time God had saved us," Bass said.

This experience led her to seek out other churches in mainline Protestant denominations who had similar stories of remarkable vitality. She and her team worked with the premise that churches that intentionally engage in Christian practices will find new vitality, and they measured this vitality with three characteristics: coherence, authenticity and transformation.

Bass explained that practices are the things the congregation does to meet human needs and serve God; they are different from programs. Practices may involve programs, but they have a greater sense of the three characteristics—coherence, authenticity and transformation. And, she said, "programs cost you money; practices are free."

The researchers uncovered over two dozen common practices, with the three strongest being theological reflection, hospitality and embracing diversity. The others include testimony, healing, peacemaking, contemplation and forgiveness.

"Practices have to come from somewhere, usually the past," Bass said. "What the past provides is the why. Without an answer to why, practices just become more work to do."

The current generation is more interested in history than the generation that birthed it, she said. "People are looking for ways to reconnect their lives with the wisdom of the past, and churches do this," she said.

Rather than taking the denominational name out of a congregation's name, which some churches want to do, Bass recommended using the denominational name as an invitation into a way of life that has a connection with the wisdom of the past.

Bass helped participants consider how her learnings might help Mennonite Church Canada and USA. She reported that people today are more passionately interested in social justice and peacemaking than the previous generation was.

"If you can introduce yourself as a living tradition with a set of practices that help young people shape a life of social justice," she said, "they'll be running all over you."

The combination of practices, tradition and wisdom formed what researchers called an "architecture of vitality." Illustrating this with three overlapping circles, Bass explained that vital congregations are places where God's people gather to intentionally become a community of practice, memory and mission. This pattern represents one form for the "emerging, postmodern church, a form that seems to most naturally develop in mainline denominations."—*Mary E. Klassen of AMBS*

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Race, culture, media focus of EMS week

Eastern Mennonite Seminary's leadership school tied to Obama inauguration.

Jim Bishop

Regina Shands Stoltzfus speaks on race relations in the church on the eve of the U.S. presidential inauguration to open the School for Leadership Training at Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

When the planners for this year's School for Leadership Training at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 19-22, chose the theme and speakers for this year's conference they had no idea how appropriate they would be.

Some 220 pastors and lay leaders attending the conference heard messages on cultural change, engaging the media and race relations just as many thousands traveled to Washington to witness the inauguration of the country's first African-American president and millions more watched the event on digital media.

Regina Shands Stoltzfus, professor at Goshen (Ind.) College, and Shane Hipps, pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church in Phoenix, Ariz., were keynote speakers on the conference theme, "Christians Engaging Cultural Change."

On the eve of the inauguration Jan. 19, Stoltzfus encouraged the audience to remember Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s call to "dangerous unselfishness—the notion that we are called into acts of serving one another that at best may not serve us and at worst may indeed cost us."

"Where we have been is part of who we are," she said. "Let us remember those times but not let the memory stunt our growth or bring us back into that place."

Hipps began his session by helping participants understand theorist Marshall McLuhan's idea that "the medium is the message."

"We tend to assume that the way media [are] used is what gives [them] value," said Hipps, "when in fact it is the medium itself that has the power to shape the mind."

By chronicling the changes in culture and faith that resulted from the production of the printing press, Hipps showed how the medium itself, printed words, ushered in an age of linear and rational thinking.

"Before the printing press a linear, sequential understanding of Jesus did not exist," said Hipps. He pointed out that the advent of the photograph and reproduction of the photograph changed the world again.

"Images reduce the ability of abstract thought," said Hipps. However, he said,"we increase our ability to live in the right side of our brains with emotion and intuition."

"The culture is changing," Hipps said. "The goal is not to be imitative of the culture but to have empathy for your audience."

Hipps also discussed three ways that Jesus engaged culture—sometimes he moved toward culture, sometimes he moved away from culture and sometimes he moved against culture.

"Mennonites," Hipps continued, "are very good at away and against, and the world needs you to do that, but you also need to move toward."

Stoltzfus ended the week by talking about racial and class divisions in society.

"We need to name the places we are different anytime there is a 'them' and an 'us,'" she said. "We need to recognize the ways our churches have been complicit in harm in the past and today and the way our sacred texts have been violated and used for violence," she said.

"We've been working at race and class issues for a long time," Stoltzfus said, "and we keep doing it better."—*Laura Lehman Amstutz of Eastern Mennonite Seminary*

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MDS faces year full of natural disasters

300 gather to celebrate Mennonite Disaster Service's work at All-Unit Meeting.

In Mennonite Disaster Service's busiest winter, Charles Duplessis' three-year wait is almost over. The Baptist pastor is about to move into what he calls "a house built on love." He means the love of MDS volunteers. Duplessis says he's met hundreds of them. They've built Duplessis a house to replace the one that was swept away when a wall of water broke through a levee and surged through New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward during Hurricane Katrina on Aug. 29, 2005.

Duplessis—who lost not only his house but also the meeting place of his church, Mount Nebo Bible Baptist, when the levee broke—gave a testimony during the annual MDS All-Unit Meeting Feb. 13-14 at Spring Hill Baptist Church in Mobile.

More than 300 MDS leaders and volunteers from the United States and Canada gathered to celebrate and support an organization that is touching more lives than ever. With a record number of 14 binational projects under way this winter, MDS activity has grown to a high point that its leaders hope to keep building on. Though contributions and grants to MDS increased by $584,000 in 2008, the year wasn't without disappointments.

"Hurricane Ike was a wake-up call, because it showed that if you don't get the media attention, then MDS is impacted," said Kevin King, executive director. Donations were lower than hoped for after the September storm, and MDS was not able to respond to the extent King would have liked.

Yet 2008 was a big year for MDS. More than 4,800 people volunteered 26,316 days to binational projects. That number doesn't include the countless people who responded to local disasters in their own regions.

It was an unusually active year for natural disasters. The hurricane season was one of the worst in history. For the first time, six consecutive named storms made U.S. landfall.

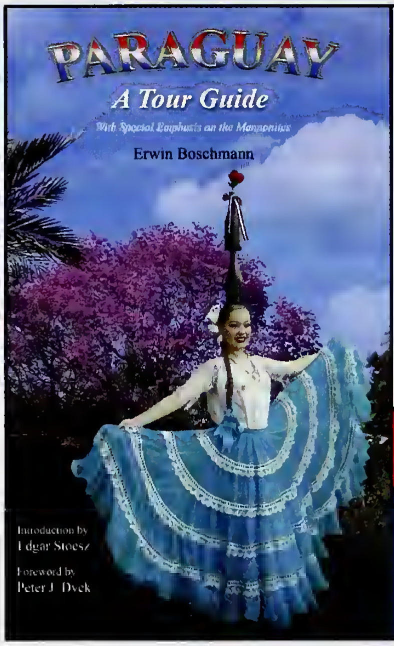
There were 500 more tornadoes in 2008 than in 2007, King said. MDS volunteers responded to floods in Manitoba and wildfires in California.

In Iowa, "2008 will never be forgotten," said Lynn Troyer of Wellman, Iowa. Summer flooding turned 86 of the state's 99 counties into disaster areas.

MDS's biggest binational projects continued on the Gulf Coast—from Mobile to southeast Texas—where recovery from 2005 hurricanes Katrina and Rita continues. MDS spent more than $1.3 million at 11 Gulf Coast locations last year.

Jerry Klassen, disaster response coordinator, led a workshop on the new Partnership Home Program. In this program, MDS connects congregations with clients in distant places for home-building projects. Church groups can travel to the construction site, or they can build a panel house close to home, ship it in pieces to the site and complete it there.

King reported that MDS has purchased property for a new office and warehouse building in Lititz, Pa. About $1.3 million has been raised toward the $3 million capital campaign goal. The MDS board of directors reaffirmed its support for the project before the All-Unit Meeting.—*Paul Schrag for Meetinghouse*



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BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Arefayene, Maereg Million, Feb. 2, to Million Arefayene and Lidet Girma, Indianapolis, Ind.

Belknap, Sophia Aspen, born Aug. 4, 2007, received for adoption on Aug. 9, 2007 by Steven and Valerie Schapansky Belknap, Inman, Kan. Adoption finalized on Jan. 22, 2009.

Carlson, Cameron Emer, Jan. 31, to Steve and Amanda Ballou Carlson, Burlington, Iowa.

Cordell, Logan Glenn, Feb. 14, to Brian and Vicki Schinski Cordell, Marion, Pa.

Hofstetter, Cody Elijah, Dec. 29, 2008, to Bryan and Lynda Troyer Hofstetter, Dalton, Ohio.

Hummel, Eva Nicole, Jan. 21, to Darrick and Sheri Starkey Hummel, Berlin, Ohio.

Lehman, Aaron Logan, Jan. 22, to Brent and Claudia Torres Lehman, Mt. Eaton, Ohio.

Lehman, Marley Marie, Jan. 17, to Edward and Maggie Wilkinson Lehman, Dowagiac, Mich.

Miller, Aaden Nathaniel, Feb. 1, to Anthony and Jenni Huntsberger Miller, Orrville, Ohio.

Miller, Addison Marie, Feb. 2, to Ledru and Annette Yoder Miller, Kalona, Iowa.

Miller, Ian Daniel, Feb. 9, to Daniel and Natalie Musser Miller, Lancaster, Pa.

Roynon, Walter Allen, Feb. 3, to Drew and Melinda Bontz Roynon, Harrisonburg, Va.

Sawatzky, Tatiana Luz, Jan. 21, to Phil and Zandra Sawatzky, Newton, Kan.

Unruh, Brennan Lee, Jan. 12, to Monte and Jana Schroeder Unruh, Perryton, Texas.

Wenger, Hannah Mae, Feb. 2, to Tim and Melinda McConnell Wenger, Orrville, Ohio.

MARRIAGES

Hochstetler/Peete: Jerry Hochstetler, Nappanee, Ind., and Felicia Peete, Nappanee, Dec. 27, 2008, at North Main Street Mennonite Church, Nappanee.

Miller/Yancey: Justin Tyler Miller, Sarasota, Fla., and Fallon Leigh Yancey, Sarasota, Feb. 8, at Bayshore Mennonite Church, Sarasota.

Regehr/Ritcha: Madison Regehr, Inman, Kan., and Brandon Ritcha, Inman, Feb. 14, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

DEATHS

Allebach, Richard Z., 59, Harleysville, Pa., died Feb. 4. Spouse: Diane Seaman Allebach. Parents: Willard M. and Lourene Ziegler Allebach. Funeral: Feb. 8 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville.

Follett, William, 98, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 19, 2008. Spouse: Katherine Follett (deceased). Children: Charles, David, Mary Jo Wright, Katherine Jean Bidwell; 15 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Jan. 5 at Greencroft Manor II, Goshen.

Gerber, Brenda D. Miller, 36, Dalton, Ohio, died Jan. 28 following an eight-month illness. Spouse: Jeremy L. Gerber. Parents: Rex and Diane Ramsier Miller. Children: Brandon S., Brooke N. Gerber. Funeral: Feb. 2 at Living Water Community Church, Dalton.

Glick, Elam H., 94, Belleville, Pa., died Dec. 30, 2008, of complications following a stroke. Spouse: Thelma A. Stoltzfus Glick. Parents: Gideon Sharp Glick and Nannie M. Yoder Glick. Children: Esther Wert, Darlis, Del, Loren; three grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 10 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

Glick, Susie L. Lapp, 85, Quarryville, Pa., died Jan. 29. Spouse: Aaron S. Click (deceased). Parents: Samuel F. and Susie Lantz Lapp. Children: Samuel L., John V., Kenneth J., Merle E., J. Elvin, Calvin W.; 12 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; four step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 3 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen, Pa.

Hoover, Roma, 84, Harrisonburg, Va., died Jan. 30. Parents: Hardy W. and Anna Andrews Forren Hoover. Funeral: Feb. 3 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Johns, Edith Mae Hoover, 85, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 5 of heart failure. Spouse: Galen Ira Johns. Parents: John Maynard and Mandella Bachtel Hoover. Children: Joe Alan, Steven, Lois Kaufmann, Loren, Lindale, Rachel Nanlee Johns; 14 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 8 at Benton Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Johnson, Lulu Belle Kauffman, 92, Perryton, Texas, died Dec. 15, 2008. Spouse: Floyd Kauffman (deceased). Parents: Felty and Susanna Kauffman. Children: Lynn Johnson, Marcella Williamson, Michelle Fowler; seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 17 at Perryton Mennonite Church.

Kauffman, Marilyn Jean Steiner, 81, Marshallville, Ohio, died Feb. 3. Spouse: John S. Kauffman. Parents: Frank and Edith Gregory Steiner. Children: Stan, David, Roland, Barry, Jeff; 13 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 7 at Orrville Mennonite Church, Orrville, Ohio.

Klassen, Otto Dyck, 81, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 31. Spouse: Jerrie Ganger Klassen. Spouse: Helen Bohn Klassen (deceased). Parents: John P. and Anna Dyck Klassen. Children: Ruth Andrews, Frieda McRae, Bess Klassen-Landis, Michelle Antioho, Suzy Klassen; 18 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 14 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

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- fax 574-535-6050
- 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794

Correction: Under Elam H. Glick ("Deaths," Feb. 3, page 34), his daughter is Esther Wert, not West.

Loewen, Edith Frances Claassen, 95, Newton, Kan., died Nov. 1, 2008. Spouse: Henry R. Loewen (deceased). Parents: John and Mary Ensz Claassen. Children: Jan Landis, Craig; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 22 at Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton.

Miller, Thurman L., 85, Fairview, Mich., died Jan. 12. Spouse: Dorothy Mae Neuhauser Miller. Parents: Oliver J. and Alta May Mast Miller. Children: T. Lee, Janis M. Bontreger, Gwendolyn K. Black, Clinton J., Brenda S. King; 16 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 17 at Best Funeral Home, Sun City, Ariz.

Orosz, Mary O. Steffe, 91, Wakarusa, Ind., died Feb. 13. Spouse: Michael Francis Orosz (deceased). Spouse: Oreal Corl (deceased). Parents: Glen and Ruth Goshert Steffe. Children: Ronald Corl, Dennis Corl; seven grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 18 at North Main Street Mennonite Church, Nappanee, Ind.

Plank, Helen Litwiller, 95, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 24. Spouse: Alden J. Plank (deceased). Parents: Silas and Ella Berkey Litwiller. Children: David, Martha Sechler; four grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 27 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Sawatzky, David Leon, 51, Windom, Kan., died Feb. 6 of cancer complications. Spouse: Kathryn A. Porzelius Sawatzky. Parents: James Lee and Darlene Goering Sawatzky. Children: Melissa Hodgson, Tracy White; one grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 9 at First Mennonite Church, McPherson, Kan.

Sutter, Mervin Earl, 84, Sarasota, Fla., died Feb. 11 of a massive stroke. Spouse: Ruby Virginia Shank Sutter. Children: Mike, Karen Hess, Patricia Pitts, Jacque, Delores Mead; 12 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 15 at Bay Shore Mennonite Church, Sarasota.

Wagler, Verna Magdalene Boshart, 82, Baden, Ontario, died Jan. 8. Spouse: Chris L. Wagler. Children: Keith, Kathy Loree, Karolyn Fournier; four grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 11 at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden.

Weaver, Edith Metzler, 85, Harrisonburg, Va., died Feb. 3. Spouse: Cleo W. Weaver. Parents: Rev. Isaac and Laura Durr Metzler. Children: Larry, Richard, Sue Weaver Funk, Ken, Bill; 12 grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 7 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Weaver, Grace Martin Hostetter, 72, Staunton, Va., died Jan. 17. Spouse: Robert "George" Weaver. Parents: Isaac Eby and Ruth Martin Hostetter. Children: Steven, Jennifer Weaver Novotny; one grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 24 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.

Wiens, Walter D., 82, Inman, Kan., died Dec. 20, 2008, of prostate cancer. Spouse: Kathryn Friesen Wiens (deceased). Parents: Daniel P. and Katie Heidebrecht Wiens. Children: Gail, Randall, Carrie Moser, Connie Luty; nine grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 23 at Inman Mennonite Church.

Witmer, Ralph, 89, Leo, Ind., died Dec. 19, 2008. Spouse: Agnes Graber Witmer (deceased). Parents: Myron and Irene Kruse Witmer. Children: Deloris Martin, Lois Schwartz, Donna Miller, Karen Jacquay, Janice Kimes; 20 grandchildren; 44 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 3 at County Line Church of God, Auburn, Ind.

Zehr, Elmer P., 88, Hesston, Kan., died Feb. 4. Spouse: Emily Hughes Zehr. Spouse: Violet Bender Zehr (deceased). Parents: Emanuel and Emma Brenneman Zehr. Children: Farrel, Paul, Carol Zehr Brown, Wanda Zehr Doig, John, Dennis, Timothy; 18 grandchildren; four step grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren; five step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 9 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

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RESOURCES

The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality by Evan Howard (Brazos Press, 2008, $39.99) offers a broad-minded approach that covers Protestant, Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. It is also interdisciplinary, drawing from fields such as theology and psychology to provide a comprehensive and ecumenical survey of Christian spirituality.

Justpeace Ethics: A Guide to Restorative Justice and Peacebuilding by Jarem Sawatsky (Wipf & Stock, 2008, $14) explores how justice and peace become one. It offers practical examples of how analysis, intervention and evaluation can be rooted in a justpeace imagination.

Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers by Eugene H. Peterson (Eerdmans, 2008, $24) explores how Jesus used language—he was earthy, not abstract; metaphorical, not dogmatic. His was not a direct language of information or instruction but an indirect, oblique language requiring a participating imagination.

Imagination and the Journey of Faith by Sandra M. Levy (Eerdmans, 2008, $18) explores how the imagination expresses itself—through ritual, music, poetry, art and story—then focuses on specific practices that can exercise and enrich our spiritual capacity, thus opening us up to divine encounter.

Springs of Living Water: Christ-Centered Church Renewal by David S. Young (Herald Press, 2008, $16.99) helps a church cultivate its spiritual life, train leaders and focus efforts in ministries that express its identity and call.

Paper House: Poetry by Jean Janzen (Good Books, 2008, $9.95) addresses such subjects as aging, intimate love, the bearing away of children, light and memory.

The Wing-Beaten Air: My Life and My Writing by Yorifumi Yaguchi, with translation and editorial assistance by Clive Collins and Yujin Yaguchi (Good Books, 2008, $11.95), is a memoir by the acclaimed Japanese poet that tells boldly what he experienced as a child growing up on the island of Honshu in the late 1930s and '40s.

Jumping Into Empty Space: A Reluctant Mennonite Businessman Serves in Paraguay's Presidential Cabinet by Ernst Bergen, as told to Phyllis Pellman Good (Good Books, 2008, $11.95), is a frank, behind-the-scenes look at Ernst Bergen's nearly five-year political career, first as his country's Minister of Industry and Commerce, then as Finance Minister, under President Nicanor Duarte Frutos (2003-08).

Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith by Shane Hipps (Zondervan, 2009, $16.99) takes readers beneath the surface of things to see how the technologies we use end up using us. However, says Hipps, a Mennonite pastor, these hidden things have far less power to shape us when they aren't hidden anymore.

A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation by Naim Stifan Ateek (Orbis, 2008, $24) proposes a vision for the unity of all Palestinian Christians, dialogue and solidarity between Christian and Muslim Palestinians and the creation of justice and peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Beyond the Din (Mennonite Central Committee, 2008) is a CD of original music by five participants in MCC's prisoner visitation program. The five musicians have been incarcerated in Manitoba correctional institutions. To order contact an MCC office at 888-563-4676.

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Bethany Christian Schools (grade 6-12; enrollment 280) invites applications for a ***full-time upper-level English teaching position*** in 2009-10. Teaching responsibilities include junior and senior English, AP English 12 and, depending on qualifications and interest, electives such as dramatic arts and creative writing. Applicants should hold, or be qualified to obtain, Indiana licensure. To apply, submit a resumé and letter of application to Allan Dueck, Principal, 2904 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526. Phone 574-534-2567; Email akdueck@bethanycs.net.

South Hutchinson Mennonite Church (central Kansas) seeks a dynamic, outgoing, Spirit-filled person to join our pastoral team as ***full-time pastor*** to our junior and senior high students. We have an active program for 85 youth; 20 percent who come from families that do not attend SHMC. A passion for working with youth who are not yet Christians and a commitment to help youth grow in their relationship with Jesus are essential. Respond to Search Chair, South Hutchinson Mennonite Church, 808 S. Poplar, South Hutchinson, KS 67505. Email judyk@shmcfamily.org or call Keith Leinbach at 620-474-9397.

***Growing and Eating Faithfully*: *Sustaining Communities*. Mennonite Camps in the United States and Canada** will offer programs for farmers, home gardeners, churches and consumers throughout the months of March and April. Visit www.mennonitecamping.org for more information, or contact the camp nearest you.

Manheim Christian Day School, (PreK-8th grade) Lancaster, Pa., is seeking an ***administrator***, July 2009. Application on Web site: www.manheimchristian.org; email jnoltmcds@dejazzd.com, Attn: Julia Nolt.

Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, a leading secondary school in southeastern Pennsylvania, with 400 students and 40 faculty members, seeks an outstanding educational leader rooted in the Anabaptist faith to serve as ***principal*** for the school beginning in July 2009. The successful candidate will embody a strong sense of community/team building, demonstrate well-developed leadership and administrative skills, display excellent interpersonal and communication skills, be an educator with a passion for leadership in a secondary school and be an active member of a congregation affiliated with an Anabaptist church. Master's degree and educational leadership experience required. Interested applicants should submit letter of intent and curriculum vitae to: Joy Sutter, chair of search committee, 2671 Crabapple Circle, Perkasie, PA 18944, or email DockSearch@gmail.com. For further information for potential candidates please visit www.dockhs.org.

Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City, Kan., is seeking a ***half-time community services coordinator***, the primary link between the church and the surrounding neighborhood. College degree preferred. Send cover letter and resumé to resume@rainbowmennonite.org. Call 913-236-8820 or visit www.rainbowmennonite.org for a complete job description.

Hesston College seeks applicants for the position of ***admissions counselor***. Qualifications: communication and organizational skills, commitment to Mennonite higher education and familiarity with Mennonite Church USA. The counselor will develop and implement a recruitment plan, build relationships with top prospects and applicants, telemarket, travel and represent Hesston College at churches and high schools. Bachelor's degree preferred. Experience working with high school youth a plus. Position available early summer. To apply, send resumé and references to Joel Kauffman, Vice President of Admissions, Hesston College, Box 3000, Hesston, KS 67062. For more information email joelk@hesston.edu or call 800-995-2757. Review of applicants begins immediately and continues until the position is filled. EOE.

Grace Mennonite Church of Regina is inviting a ***full-time pastor or pastoral team*** beginning the spring or summer of 2009. Grace Mennonite Church is an urban congregation of 100-120 members. We are an intergenerational, multicultural church. We are looking forward to working with pastoral leadership that has a vision for church growth and for involving young adults. The pastor/pastoral team should be committed to Anabaptist/Mennonite theology and practice within Mennonite Church Canada, support and nurture a team model of working with the youth pastor and lay leadership, and be comfortable preaching, teaching and providing pastoral care. Seminary education is preferred; pastoral experience is desired. Please reply to: Joe Neufeld, Search Committee Chair, Grace Mennonite Church, 2935 Pasqua St., Regina, SK S4S 2H4; jandjneufeld@sasktel.net.

Stumptown Mennonite Church, www.stumptown.pa.us.mennonite.net, Bird-in-Hand, Pa., seeks applicants for a ***half-time associate pastor*** for summer of 2009. We envision an associate pastor focusing primarily on youth and young adult ministry with tools of spiritual formation and leadership development. Our associate pastor will be committed to the way of Jesus with Anabaptist theology and practice, operating in a team setting. Letters of interest and/or resumés can be sent to Ryan Ebersole, Fax 717-687-6375 or email Pastor Don Sharp, donsharp@hydrosoft.net.

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Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan., is seeking a ***full-time lead pastor***. Contact Elam Peachey by email: Elamp@cox.net; phone 620-217-8149.

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The Mennonite Heritage Cruise and its international resource team invites you to join the ***15th annual cruise in Ukraine on the Dnieper River and Black Sea*** in late September 2009. This has been the ultimate 15-day roots-discovery experience for 2,500 descendants of Russian Mennonites and others. For details of the cruise Google "Mennonite Heritage Cruise" or phone Marina Unger, 800-387-1488, ext. 2827.

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PENNSYLVANIA to EUROPE (June 19-July 2)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE (June 24-July 5)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN SHARP (June 29-July 12)
ITALY, AUSTRIA & GERMANY (July 7-17)
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Resilience in hard times

Gerald Shenk teaches at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va., and works with The Table, an emerging Mennonite congregation.

They say we're in uncharted waters with this financial crisis, and in some ways that seems to be the case. But families for countless generations have weathered hard times, often growing stronger in the face of external threats. How, I wonder, are young families in particular coping with these fearsome financial challenges? How are real families coping with the foreboding dark clouds of impending economic collapse? How shall we respond to news reports that paint pictures of cataclysm at the level of civilization-as-we-know-it?

I see a natural tendency to pull in the outstretched limbs, hunker down and take prudent precautionary measures. I know the instinctive response that moves to hoard and protect the assets that remain. I applaud the steps I see people taking to trim excessive expenses and use fewer resources out of care for the environment.

These are the times to rediscover the simplest delights and virtues of life together in our families.

But it is time to step back, turn down the volume on the incessant bad news chatter and take stock of our real situation. This is what families are for: We hold things together in good times but especially in hard times. When we send the alarm signal down into our roots, we discover there are solid, proven capacities we can draw on, memories we can pull up and rehearse about how our parents and their parents, stretching back many generations, not only survived but thrived in tough seasons of the past. There are stories that can brighten our dark nights and songs to get us through what is sure to be a long journey.

One of these stories comes from my family. In the throes of the Great Depression, my grandparents had lost one farm and struggled to keep another. During a lean year, as the church offering came around to the annual support for mission, their household had little or nothing to contribute, or so it seemed.

The Sunday after the mission offering, church leaders at the congregation announced there might have been a mistake. Somebody apparently had placed a valuable gold coin in the collection plate, perhaps mistaking it for a lesser coin. They would be happy to return it if the mistake were acknowledged and the coin reclaimed. No one stepped up to take back the coin. It did indeed go to support the church's mission efforts. Family lore has it that the coin looked just like a precious gold piece that had come into my grandparents' possession as a wedding gift.

As a Mennonite people, often we have earned a reputation for frugality and simplicity in lifestyle, sometimes verging on tight-fisted stinginess. Many of our self-deprecating jokes turn on this temptation to a miserly spirit. Yet there are many stories among us of generosity, when largeness of spirit meets human need with cheerful goodwill. In times like these, it's time to relinquish the humility that prevents us from telling these stories. After all, they feature the self-sacrificial love at the core of our salvation history.

What God has done for us in Christ allows us in turn to share freely with others. This is what makes families work. This is the channel that brings water up from our roots. This is the source of the quiet confidence that produced legions of intrepid cross-cultural witnesses, fearless martyrs and faithful everyday disciples. Whether rural doctor, front-line peacebuilder, middle-school teacher, farming family, counselor, insurance underwriter, backwoods environmentalist—all taking their skills into the marketplace without expecting high-octane financial reward, all working to develop their communities as safe places for human thriving.

Jeremiah writes: "Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit" (17:7-8).

Perhaps in the providence of God, these are the times to rediscover the simplest delights and virtues of life together in our families. Poetry, stories, songs and games are surely more recession-proof than the gadgets and widgets of late modernity. These family activities create shade and shelter for others also. Soup with neighbors around our table outranks fine dining at the overpriced restaurant downtown.

Instead of hunkering down under the bleak misery of survivalist mentalities, we can live into the stories of God's people in hard times whose trust was in the Lord. And that trust will bring us together with renewed solidarity as the people of God. Rather than merely fending for ourselves, we will learn again to tend to the commonweal—growing in generosity of spirit, staying green and bearing fruit, facing the future together as a people whose God is the Lord.

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Everett J. Thomas

Join The Corinthian Plan

As a denomination, we are committed in principle to providing basic health insurance for all eligible pastors. We request the Executive Board to oversee the development and implementation of a plan whereby all congregations of Mennonite Church USA participate together in an arrangement that covers all of our pastors with basic health insurance.—resolution passed by 2007 Delegate Assembly in San José, Calif.

During the 2007 discussion of a plan to provide basic health care for all Mennonite Church USA pastors, executive director Jim Schrag compared the efforts that would follow to a four-lap race. The first lap was the vote by the Delegate Assembly. The second lap was working with denominational agencies and schools to enlist their support. The third lap was working with area conferences. We are now beginning the fourth and final lap of the race.

"Enough congregations have to opt in," Schrag said in 2007. "If critical mass is not achieved, it's not worth trying to implement it."

This month congregations will begin hearing about the plan that has emerged over the past two years. According to Keith Harder, the Executive Leadership staff person assigned to work with the plan, the goal is to have 300 congregations signed up by the time the Delegate Assembly meets in Columbus, Ohio, in July. This will build the momentum needed to reach the goal of 700 congregations by Oct. 1.

Enough congregations have to opt in. If critical mass is not achieved, it's not worth trying to implement it.—Jim Schrag

"When they see the numbers," Harder said last month, "that's going to be the acid test. Ten or 11 conferences are already participating [in the current health insurance plan], so that's not a big jump. My sense is that there is a real commitment to be part of it."

The initiative, called The Corinthian Plan, takes its name from Paul's efforts to get wealthier believers in Corinth to share with the distressed believers in Jerusalem. On page 8, Harder lays out the biblical example of the Corinthians.

"This Scripture and others suggest," Harder writes, "that God did not intend that some would have unlimited access to health care while others live off the crumbs that are left over."

The Corinthian Plan is countercultural in some ways, and the timing of its launch during an economic recession is problematic. But in spite of these head winds, all Mennonite Church USA congregations should participate. It is a matter of justice and equality.

In the months after the 2007 resolution, some of our readers sent letters questioning the fairness of a plan that helps only pastors. But doing nothing because we cannot do everything is not an option.

There are nearly 100 pastors in Mennonite Church USA congregations currently without access to health care. Harder is correct when he writes that this lack of access compromises their ministries and the mission of their congregations.

This initiative includes an antiracism dimension as well. Many pastors who do not have basic health insurance serve in our racial-ethnic congregations. For a denomination that established the dismantling of racism as a top priority, The Corinthian Plan will give many large, stable white congregations an opportunity to help mitigate against a system that unfairly disenfranchises people of color.

The sign-up period for congregations wishing to participate in The Corinthian Plan is from April through early October. Congregations that wish to get more information should contact their area conference offices.

As I learned running the 1,600-meter race in high school, the last lap is the toughest. But it's not possible to run the fourth lap until after the first, second and third laps are finished. We at *The Mennonite* participated in the second lap; this was the time for Mennonite Church USA agencies and schools to get on board with the plan. We did so to help establish fairness and balance across the church for our pastoral leaders.

Join us.—*ejt*

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The generosity of Jesus

Clarence Rempel is pastor of First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

The economic crash of 2008 was essentially a spiritual problem of unregulated greed and uncontrolled selfishness—the dark side of free market enterprise. The antidote to the poison of greed is generosity, says Paul in his letter to the Christians of Philippi caught in a downward spiral of "selfish ambition or vain conceit" (Philippians 2:3). Paul challenges the Christians to get into the mind of Jesus, an incredibly generous Jesus.

Jesus was generous in coming to live with us "in human likeness" (Philippians 2:7). It's hard for me to imagine moving from my comfortable home in Newton, Kan., to a Muslim village in northern Africa, living in a one-room, mud-plastered house with a dirt floor and cooking over an open fire. I'd feel I had given up a lot to be with people who weren't even interested in the message I had. Our Mennonite mission workers have done that. That's what Jesus did, but at an even more intense level.

Jesus gave up the comforts and joys of triune eternal companionship to enter into the messiness of living with sinful, broken humanity—the hypocrisy, violence, sickness and greed. Jesus came to share a new vision for living with humility, compassion and mercy.

Jesus demonstrated his generosity by getting involved in making things right here on earth. Wherever Jesus encountered human need, people received more than they hoped for. The disabled paraplegic received restored mobility and a relationship with God. The hemorrhaging woman was healed in body and restored to dignity in community. Jesus did more than expected. When he put on a feast of fish and chips, there were seven donkey-cargo baskets of leftovers. Why so much? At another meal, Jesus not only acted as Passover host but took the role of household slave and washed the disciples' dirty feet.

Philippians 2:7 says Jesus took "the very nature of a servant." Slaves were common in Jesus' day. They cleaned up the messes free people made. Jesus cleaned up, set things right in the house of God. In Jerusalem, Jesus went to the center of religious power and staged a symbolic, nonviolent protest in the temple against the merchants using the prayer area for Gentiles as an open air market. Jesus said, "My house shall be a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of robbers" (Luke 19:45-46). What would Jesus say to Wall Street?

Jesus generously risked his life for the sake of God's kingdom of justice and righteousness on earth as it is in heaven. He risked his life for God's redeeming work in the world in obedience to God's call on his life. The consequence of boldly confronting evil was "death on a cross."

Let's not confuse Jesus' death with the ultimate sacrifice language used in American civil religion. Soldiers die risking their lives for freedom, comrades and the honor of their nation. I respect their courage and sacrifice. But their mission is not God's, and their methods are not God's. Soldiers die trying to kill enemy combatants. Jesus died because he refused violent self-protection. He was committed to overcoming evil with generosity, hatred with love, absorbing violence in a nonresistant martyr's death on a cross.

Because Jesus was obedient to the Father and was willing to die while being true to God's way, Jesus' death became the pivotal saving event for all humanity for all of history.

Jesus lived generosity in his incarnation, his ministry and his death. Paul says, Let this generosity of Jesus soak into your mind and permeate your worldview. Let it transform your selfish and greedy behavior. Be generous like Jesus was generous (Philippians 2:1-11). TM

TheMennonite

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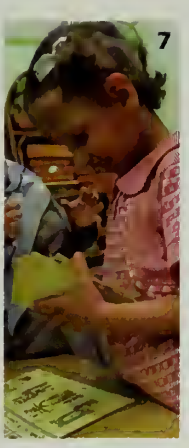

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Cover: Indigenous Nivacés at a common bike race in the Efeso village in the Chaco in Paraguay. Photo by Egon Rempel

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Linking homeless with churches

We applaud Jan Johnson's article, "Friends in Need: Preventing Homelessness Before It Starts" (Feb. 17). Jan's approach is respectful and honoring of Carol, the friend she is helping stay out of homelessness.

As staff and board members of Bridge of Hope National, we hear many Christians in churches across the country asking questions such as, What if I don't know a "Carol" in my circle of friends, neighbors or acquaintances? How do I best befriend "Carol" and not overwhelm her or engage in unhealthy "helping."

Today, in 16 communities across seven states (with a new location opening in Harrisonburg-Rockingham County, Va., this month), Bridge of Hope affiliates are linking churches in mentoring friendships with homeless and at-risk single mothers and their children (www.bridgeofhopeinc.org). So often we in the church want to reach out in friendship, want to be supportive in a way that brings life, dignity and hope, but we don't always know how. At Bridge of Hope, we have found that one of our unique roles is in helping equip and nurture church folks in this path of friendship and support.

Thanks, Jan, for your words that echo with a rich wisdom and sensitivity to the homeless or at-risk single mother in our lives, who can also be our friend.—*Edith Yoder, Wendy Hoke Witmer, Leslie Homer-Cattell, James M. Lapp, Larry Massanari, Joy Swartley Sawatzky, Diane Tihansky, Ruth S. Weaver, Joan Gotwals Yoder*

Lord's Prayer not in classroom

This is Adam Robb from the Pledge of Allegiance article ("Mennonite Teacher has Personal Pledge," Feb. 3). I really enjoyed reading the article. Anna Groff did a nice job of writing it up. However, I think that a correction needs to be made, perhaps even to save my skin. In the quote of me, the article says, "[Robb] says many teachers in his district—in a Mennonite community—lead the Lord's Prayer after the Pledge is recited. 'Some places that wouldn't fly,' he adds."

While it is true that this wouldn't fly in many districts; it actually doesn't fly in ours either. I believe what I said—it could have been due to poor cell phone reception that we miscommunicated—was that many sports teams say the Lord's Prayer before or after competition. None of the teachers in the district use the Lord's Prayer in the classroom. I'm sorry if there was some misunderstanding in our conversation, but it is definitely not true that teachers say the Lord's Prayer in class.

I do appreciate you taking the time to consider a correction. My school district and community will appreciate it. And it will help me feel a bit more comfortable about any possible ramifications from the district.—*Adam Robb, Moundridge, Kan.*

Keep Communion understanding

Eleanor Kreider's article in the Feb. 17 issue proposes a new understanding of Communion ("Communion Questions"). What is wrong, however, with our current understanding? Article 12 of *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* states, "We believe that the Lord's Supper is a sign by which the church thankfully remembers the new covenant which Jesus established by his death. In this Communion meal, the members of the church renew our covenant with God and with each other."

We Mennonites do not have a corner on the truth. But God has entrusted us with some particular understandings: "blessed are the peacemakers" as a rule for life; baptism as a courageous adult decision; the church as a gathered community of baptized believers; believers' Communion as the symbol of our continued commitment to that community.

This solemn understanding of Communion is what Jesus demonstrated when he instituted the practice among his closest followers. It is certainly what Paul understood when he wrote in his letter to the Corinthians that "whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord."

We have never understood the concern that believers' Communion is offensive to those who have not yet joined the community of believers. As Mennonites, we should be openly, enthusiastically invitational. But the invitation is to join in our worship and potlucks and Sunday school classes—and

IN THIS ISSUE

Ten days after our Delegate Assembly concludes at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Columbus, Ohio, Mennonite World Conference's Assembly Gathered begins July 14 in Asunción, Paraguay. In this issue we provide some historical background to the Mennonites who established the church there (pages 8-17). We also focus on an important search process in our denomination; on page 19 the committee that will choose the next executive director for Mennonite Church USA lays out a tentative job description and asks for counsel as well as names. In other news, Anna Groff reports on the difficulties experienced by some Ten Thousand Villages stores as a new contract requires 80 percent of all products to be purchased from Ten Thousand Villages (page 20).—*Editor* ultimately to come to faith and join our community through baptism. Let's not denude Communion of its deepest significance. We have so few rituals—and fewer that express the passionate communitarian life that is the jewel of lived Anabaptist faith. Let's keep believers' Communion.—*Timothy and Ruth Stoltzfus Jost, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Church has opportunity with veterans

I appreciate Everett Thomas' editorial, "Damaged Veterans Need Healing" (Feb. 17). I had been doing some thinking about this problem of returning veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder for some time because it was in the news. Then I read the "Wounds of War" article in July 8, 2008, issue. I followed that up by contacting the author, Carolyn Heggen. Interestingly, she was planning a workshop at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., sponsored by the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, and a second workshop in Williamsburg, Va., in November 2008. I attended both.

The problem is much larger than I imagined, and it's quite complex. It is so large that the U.S. military and the Veterans Administration are unable to meet all the needs of the returning soldiers. I really don't know how to approach this huge problem locally, but along with some interested people, we have made some contacts; hopefully, some leadership and direction will emerge.

We as a church do have an opportunity here—through the guidance of the Holy Spirit—to allow God's healing and hope to flow through us to this part of our world. I would repeat Thomas' second-to-last paragraph for emphasis, "This call is too important to fade into memories of good ideas. We hear again and again from Mennonite Church USA leaders and others that a missional church discerns where God is at work and then joins in that work."

This is a compassion, mercy and justice issue.—*Richard Alderfer, Waynesboro, Va.*

Holy warmth amid wild whimsy

Some months ago after noticing that the novel *The Shack* had kept its spot high on the reading charts, I decided to see why it had such appeal—truly expecting little more than another popular "Christian fiction." Instead I found this a novel following a whimsical, even puzzling path to a God I enjoyed getting to know better. This was a God actively caring for me as I deal with doubt, loss and disappointment. This God delights in and hovers over the varied creations—many wondrous and good, some turning horrible and perplexing—but all blest with God's constant love and amazing grace. Soon several friends confided that this story gave them comfort and a new awareness of God's presence in their world.

I remember wondering if *The Mennonite* would bother to give it recognition—I must have anticipated what Gordon Houser wrote in the Jan. 20 Mediaculture column ("*The Shack*: Simplistic, Didactic and Wildly Popular"). Reviews there have often guided my choices to read or view. But this was a surprisingly snobbish put-down. I did smile when I read the stated "rules" for fiction writing. So, "beginning with a description of the weather" is a no-no? I discover in the novel an extremely varied and individual writing form. And that final sniff, "I prefer the Bible," suggests that those who find this a beguiling tale of a lost and reimagined faith also consider it divine revelation.

The Shack cannot appeal to all, but those who read it guided by an active imagination will discover holy warmth amid the wild whimsy—as well as a refreshed faith. Many will benefit by discussing the novel in a group kept lively with questions raised and insights received.—*Helen Lapp, Lansdale, Pa.*

Editor's note: *In our March 3 issue we announced that we would discontinue responses to Gordon Houser's Jan. 20 review of* The Shack. *This letter arrived before the announcement.*

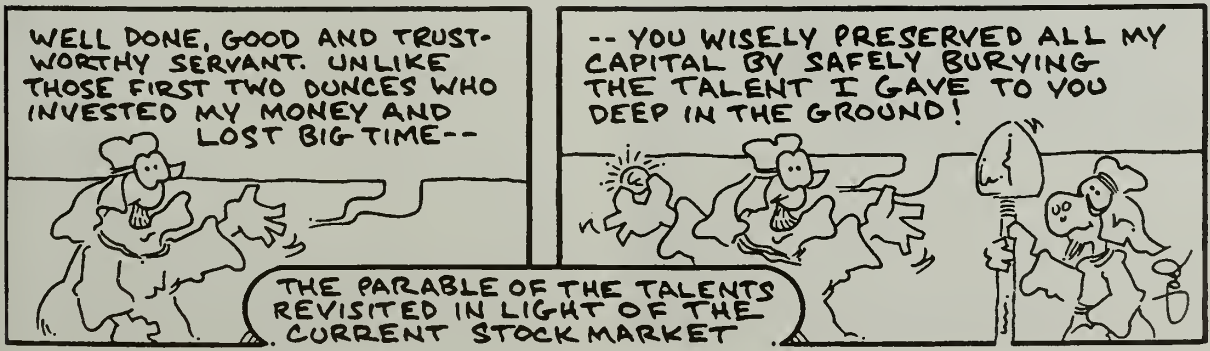
ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Re the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Paraguay: (42 votes)

- ○ I am not attending (88%)
- ○ I am attending (10%)
- ○ Not sure (2%)

Check out the new poll question at www. TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**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IN BRIEF

Steeler crossways

If you watched the Super Bowl game between the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Arizona Cardinals, you could not miss seeing Steelers safety Troy Polamalu, a Samoan with hair that hasn't been cut in seven years. You may have also noticed that he often crosses himself while on the field. He crosses himself from right to left because that's how Orthodox Christians do it (the opposite of how many Western Christians do it). Polamalu and his wife are members of a Greek Orthodox church.—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

Text reliance

- Average number of monthly text messages by U.S. wireless customers ages 13-17: 1,742
- Percentage of teenagers who say their social life would end or suffer without text messaging: 47
- Percentage of teenagers who can text blindfolded: 42

—*YES!* magazine

Arson fire prayers

On Feb. 21 and 28 Coatesville (Pa.) Mennonite Church partnered with another church and held prayer breakfasts in light of this year's arson fires. "There have been 67 arson fires in Coatesville and the surrounding community since February," said Leonard Groff, assistant pastor. "Most of the fires destroyed homes. The worst was a fire that destroyed 15 row houses."—*Anna Groff*

Paraguay 2009 registration numbers climbing

STRASBOURG, France—By late-February, Mennonite World Conference had processed more than 1,500 international registrations for Assembly Gathered to be held in Asunción, Paraguay, in July. These registrations included 150 from Latin American countries other than Paraguay. Paraguay 2009 registration fees were set more than one year ago—before the economic crisis sent the Euro, Canadian dollar and Paraguayan Guaraní into a downward spiral, thus reducing the value of registrations paid in those currencies. As a gesture of solidarity with members of the global faith community in a time of financial stress, MWC officials decided to waive the late registration fee.

Registrants who have already paid the late fee may redirect the fee as a contribution to the Travel Fund or have the fee credited toward their final billing. Registrations from Canada, now at about 500, and Europe, slightly less than 300, are strong, which is no surprise, given the many family connections and migrations to and from Paraguay. Registrations from the Unites States stand at 535; this is about 75 percent of the 700 MWC projected.

Germany has passed the 100 mark; the Netherlands and Switzerland are well beyond 50 registrants, with France just shy of that number. Registrations from Africa are ahead of projections, but "the painful reality," says Ray Brubacher, international coordinator for Paraguay 2009, "is that many of these registrants will need travel subsidies to make the trip." All registrants are invited to make a contribution to the international Travel Fund to assist those in lower income countries to attend.—*MWC*

photo provided

Falcon provides fresh meat for camp staff meals

Jana Atwell of Spruce Lake Retreat in Canadensis, Pa., was featured on WNEP TV's "Pennsylvania Outdoor Life" program Feb. 15. Jana is a licensed falconer. She occasionally offers rabbit caught by the falcon at the camp staff potluck meals.—*Mennonite Camping Association*

Mennonites say town holding up construction

CICERO, Ill.—After what it says were two years of fruitlessly waiting for Cicero to act on its building application, a growing Hispanic Mennonite church has filed a federal lawsuit accusing the town of violating its religious rights.

Sonido De Alabanza, Spanish for "Sound of Praise," has occupied a former American Legion Hall in Cicero for about 13 years.

Nearly 1,000 people now attend Sunday services, says Pastor Esdras Ferreras, and the congregation needs more space.

So in December 2006, Sonido purchased a corner lot and two vacant buildings 400 feet to the west that it planned to convert into a 1,580-seat auditorium and more. Ferreras says town officials said beforehand that a church would be permitted there under zoning laws.

But the church says it encountered only delays and obstacles over the next two years, culminating, according to the lawsuit, last August, when a town secretary allegedly told the church that the procedures city officials had asked it to follow were incorrect. The church in its lawsuit alleges that one town official pledged not to allow a church in the building, and another said Cicero doesn't want churches to expand and remove property from the tax rolls.

Sonido filed its final architectural drawings last August, says its attorney, Jeff Schwab. According to the lawsuit, the plans should have been reviewed within four weeks; when the congregation received no response, it took Cicero to court.

Cicero spokesman Dan Proft says the town never received the final architectural drawings last August and is still awaiting Sonido's response to a March 2008 letter listing a dozen items the town wanted addressed, primarily dealing with parking and traffic issues.—*Chicago Tribune*

CMU reaches milestone enrollment of 500

WINNIPEG, Man.—Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) reached a milestone in January, when it passed the 500-student mark in its undergraduate programs. A total of 506 students are enrolled for the winter semester, an increase of 18 students over the fall semester.

Altogether, 630 students are studying through the Shaftesbury campus during the winter semester, including 32 graduate students and 92 students in the Outtatown adventure and discipleship program.

Together with more than 1,000 students at Menno Simons College, CMU's campus at the University of Winnipeg, nearly 1,700 students are taking courses at CMU.—*CMU*

Ryan Beiler

CC continues to support families in Gaza Strip
uha Namrwouty, 6, learns letters and sounds from Ifidal Abu
adil at Al Shroq Wal Amal Children's Center in Khan Younis,
aza Strip, in this 2004 photo. The center is supported by
ennonite Central Committee's Global Family education spon-
orship program.—*MCC*

OurFaith Digest goes paperless this spring

GOSHEN, Ind.—The free magazine *OurFaith Digest* will cease to be a paper magazine after the Spring 2009 issue is mailed to Mennonite/Anabaptist congregations later this month. The economic recession is the reason for the change.

"This is a bittersweet moment," says editor Joe Miller. "The team at *The Mennonite* was unstinting in their help with *OurFaith Digest*, and the magazine had really turned the corner. Thanks to all the churches and individual supporters, we finished the year in the black. But when we called on advertisers for the spring issue, fully three-quarters of them had to pull out because of the bad economy. There was really nothing we could do."

OurFaith Digest, published three times each year, needs about $9,000 in advertising in each issue to remain viable. The Spring 2009 issue will have only $3,400 in advertising. An online version of *OurFaith Digest* is currently posted on the Web (www.OurFaithDigest.org) and is updated weekly. The Internet version includes many of the same features as the print version, including the popular crossword puzzle. *OurFaith Digest* is a sister publication to *The Mennonite* and is published by The Mennonite, Inc.—*OurFaith Digest*

AMBS presidential search committee meets

GOSHEN, Ind.—The Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary presidential search committee met Feb. 19-20 in Goshen to continue its work of selecting a candidate to serve as the next president of AMBS. The committee reviewed input it has received from more than a dozen constituency groups and stakeholders in AMBS. The committee will continue seeking input and nominations, even as it moves into a public advertising phase of the search. In March, the committee will publish a candidate profile and position announcement. Current president Nelson Kraybill steps down this summer, and George R. Brunk III will serve as interim president.—*AMBS*

Veteran missionary surgeon dies at 88

LITITZ, Pa.—Not many people serve over 40 years in Africa while also excelling in both medical and pastoral ministry. But that is what marked the life of J. Lester Eshleman. Eshleman died Jan. 18 at age 88 at Landis Homes, Lititz. Lester and Lois Eshleman first went to Tanzania in 1951, serving as a doctor and nurse anesthetist, respectively, at Shirati Hospital until 1966. Then Lester completed a residency in urology at the University of Pennsylvania. During this time he also co-pastored at Parkesburg Mennonite Church. They also spent 20 years in Moshi, Tanzania and six years in the Congo.—*Eastern Mennonite Missions*

CPT reports humanitarian law violations

COLOMBIA—Christian Peacemaker Teams in Colombia has released its compilation of International Humanitarian Law violations witnessed by or reported to the Colombia team in the calendar year of 2008. The full report is available at www.cpt.org. Three principal actors in Colombia's armed conflict committed the IHL violations this report covers: the Armed Forces, with 20 violations documented; the paramilitary groups, with 21 cases documented; and the guerrilla groups, with five cases documented.—*CPT*

Reaching the Philippines' Deaf community

PASIG CITY, Philippines—Julia Bange, a deaf Eastern Mennonite Missions-associated missionary working with DOOR (Deaf Opportunity OutReach) International in training with Wycliffe Bible Translators, is working on translating the Bible into the Filipino sign language.

The sign language Bible translation team, which consists of three Filipino deaf men, is also working on getting Scripture into signs. Although sign language is a universal language, it is different in every country. "In Africa alone, for example, there are 50 different sign languages," Bange says.

The Bible translation work in the Philippines began in November 2007, and it is hoped that the 32 studies for evangelism are finished by March 2010.—*EMM*

—compiled by Anna Groff

IN BRIEF

Kniss named new EMU provost

Fred Kniss, currently of Chicago and a 1979 honors graduate of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., will return to his alma mater as the new provost July 1. Kniss is chair of the department of sociology at Loyola University, Chicago, where he has been a faculty member since 1991. During his tenure he was interim dean of The Graduate School at Loyola, 2004-05, and graduate program director in the sociology department, 2000-04. He is married to Rosalyn Myers Kniss; they are members of Chicago Community Mennonite Church. Lee F. Snyder is serving as interim provost during the 2008-09 academic year.—*EMU*

Bethel young alumnus awarded

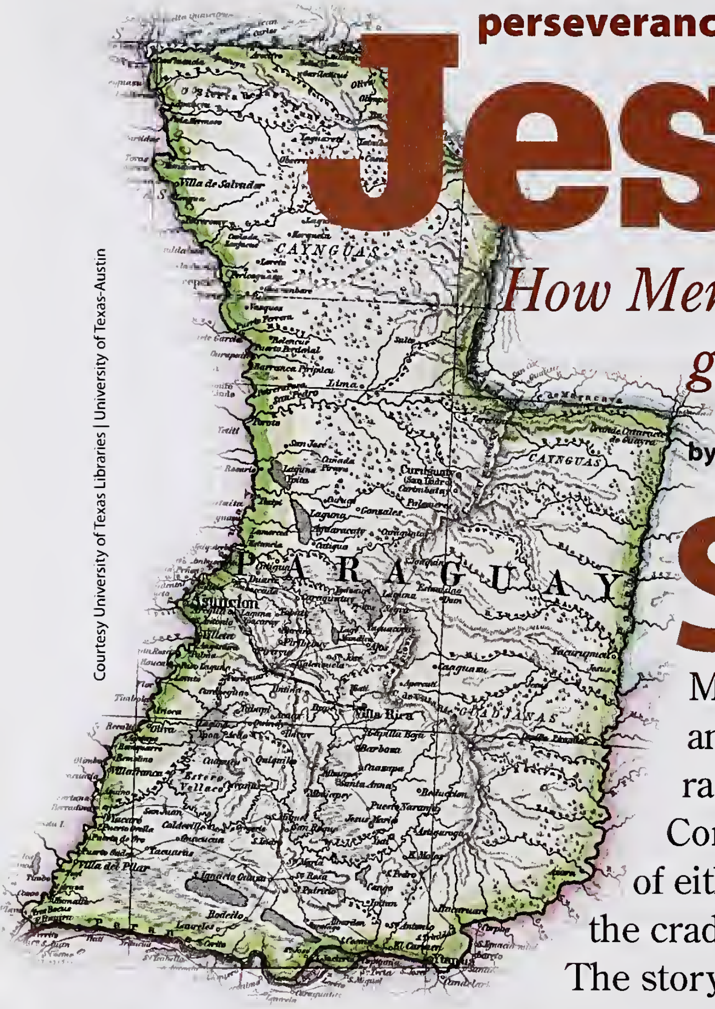
Jennifer (Scott) Koontz, a 1998 graduate, received this year's Young Alumnus Award at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. Sports medicine, health care for the uninsured and community service are her ongoing interests. Koontz now has a sports medicine fellowship at Via Christi in Wichita, Kan., and will begin practicing family and sports medicine in Newton in August.—*Bethel College*

The story of Mennonites in Paraguay is a marvelous example of God's leading and human ingenuity and perseverance.

Jesus, go

How Mennonites in Paraguay gathered, prospered and gave back.

by Edgar Stoesz



Courtesy University of Texas Libraries | University of Texas-Austin

Since the first exploration in 1921, Paraguay has become a kind of city of refuge for Mennonites. In 2008, the entire multiethnic Mennonite population, including the indigenous and Paraguayan Latinos, was around 60,000. This ranks it in the top 10 countries in Mennonite World Conference and exceeds the Mennonite population of either Holland or Switzerland, usually regarded as the cradle of the Mennonite movement.

The story of Mennonites in Paraguay is a marvelous example of God's leading and human ingenuity and perseverance. This moving story is told in more detail in *Like a Mustard Seed: Mennonites in Paraguay* (Herald Press, 2008) from which this abbreviated version is drawn.

How they gathered: Old Colony Mennonites from Canada were the first of four separate movements. They arrived in the Paraguayan Chaco in 1927, taking the name Menno Colony. Another group followed in 1948, establishing Bergthal and Sommerfeld colonies in East Paraguay. They had emigrated from Russia to Manitoba and Saskatchewan in the 1870s. After 50 years, they felt threatened by the encroaching world and Canadian laws that forbade them to conduct their schools in the German language.

Paraguay 2009
Mennonite World Conference
Assembly Gathered

before us

A second grouping of Russian Mennonites immigrated to Paraguay in 1930, establishing Fernheim Colony. These Mennonites had suffered through the Russian Revolution. Later the way opened for them to leave. After a brief stay in Germany, approximately one-third of them got their wish to go to Canada, some occupying farms left behind by those immigrating to Paraguay. Another third pioneered a settlement in Santa Katarina, Brazil, but most later resettled in Curitiba, Brazil. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) helped the remaining third settle in Paraguay, neighbor to Menno Colony.

The largest group (5,616 Mennonite refugees) came to Paraguay in 1947. Their dramatic story is told in *Up from the Rubble* by Peter J. and Elfrieda Dyck. Half went to the Chaco, where they formed Neuland Colony. The other half went to East Paraguay, where they formed Volendam Colony. They were assisted by Friesland Colony, which had broken off from Fernheim Colony 10 years earlier.

Beginning in 1967, the first of three unrelated small groupings of Swiss Mennonites immigrated to East Paraguay. This included an Old Order Amish and a Beachy Amish group, both from Ohio, and a conservative group that split from Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference.

The fourth and last mass migration of German-speaking Old Colony Mennonites immigrated to East Paraguay (and Bolivia) from Mexico in four groups, beginning in 1969.

While the Old Colony families that came from Canada and Mexico—along with the Swiss Mennonites—came voluntarily and managed on their own, those who came directly from Russia came as refugees, with substantial assistance from MCC.

The indigenous (First Nation people) also found themselves in a Chaco they had never known, without having left it. The 1932-35 Chaco War and the coming of Mennonites created a whole new reality for them. There was still room in the vast Chaco for them to relocate, but they elected to stay. And many were attracted to join this unplanned, bicultural experiment with few equals anywhere.

Continued on page 10

A burden to witness: Elenita, Liliana and Doreen, former students at Instituto Biblico Asunción, a Bible school in Asunción.

body juniors club
new faces of the sport

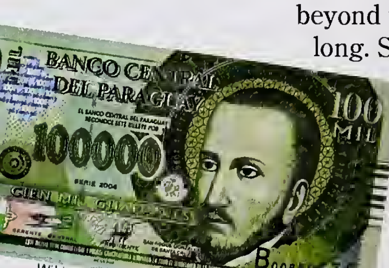
Continued from page 9

Called to mission: The ordination service of four pairs of deacons in a church in Filadelfia, June 8, 2006.

How they prospered: When Fernheim Colony celebrated its silver anniversary in 1955, it did so not knowing if it would survive. One of its leaders said, "We knew we would be poor; we did not know we would be poor so long." This was also true of the other colonies. Many who could have left for better prospects, mostly to Canada and Germany. As a new generation took the reins, a series of innovations began to have a positive effect.

- Colony cooperatives made quantity purchasing of essentials and the marketing of surplus products in Asunción possible.
- MCC and the U.S. Government helped build a 300-mile road connecting the Chaco to Asunción, reducing isolation and the cost of transport.
- Robert Unruh, an MCC agronomist, discovered buffelgrass, which gave rise to the burgeoning of ranching.
- Twice Paraguayan Mennonite leaders came to get loans from brothers and sisters in the United States and Canada. Then came a $1 million development loan from the U.S. government, followed by substantial loans from Germany. With this credit, Mennonites bought equipment to process raw milk into cheese and later yogurt and ice cream, logs into lumber, peanuts into cooking oil.

The second generation learned how to farm in tropical Paraguay. They also learned how to navigate the Latino culture in the Spanish language. Today the third generation of German-speaking Mennonites have, with diligence and God's blessings, plus some help from the outside, progressed beyond the subsistence level that plagued them so long. Some have ventured into business, with annual revenues in the millions of dollars and hundreds of employees. A few have ventured into politics, occupying positions of influence in the recently ended administration of President Niconor Duarte Frutos. Paraguayan Mennonite names will soon appear on the list of Paraguay's 100 wealthiest families.



Wikimedia Commons | wikipedia.org

How they gave back: Mennonites did not come to Paraguay to do mission. They came seeking a place to live in accordance with their religious convictions. But a missionary spirit lay dormant in their souls. In the words of Gerhard Hein, a lifelong missionary to the indigenous, "When we saw the Indians, we said, 'Is this what God had in mind when he directed us to Paraguay?'"

At their first harvest festival in the Chaco, Fernheim churches called for workers to initiate a mission to their unexpected neighbors. The Chaco War between Paraguay and Bolivia intervened, but on the last day of the war, 97 Mennonite families began Licht den Indianern (Light for the Indians).

After 10 years they did not have one convert, but in 1946, Sepe Llama, an Enlhet, requested baptism. That developed into a network of 39 indigenous congregations with 9,100 members served by more than 300 indigenous pastors.

In the 1950s, the indigenous families demanded land to create their own chacras (farmettes). Over the years, more than 12,000 indigenous people have been assisted, with help from MCC and European organizations, to occupy 300,000 acres (460 square miles). They have more than 13,000 head of cattle.

Education was one of four original mission objectives. There were no schools, and the indigenous population was illiterate. Slowly the indigenous languages were alphabetized, basic primers written and printed. After some years, indigenous teachers replaced German Mennonite teachers. By 1985, 95 percent of the children living in communities served by the Mennonite mission had access to at least three years of classroom learning. In 2006, just under 4,000 indigenous children were enrolled in a network of schools with more than 190 indigenous teachers, while 150 were enrolled in a high school in Yalve Sanga.

Improved health was a second mission objective. Mennonite hospitals served indigenous patients, but to serve them better, Mennonites constructed a hospital in Yalve Sanga in 1953. In 1968, Dr. Hans Epp was appointed the first full-time physician serving the indigenous population in Yalve Sanga and in 16 scattered village clinics. Dr. Epp also introduced a public health program to address tuberculosis, worms and childhood diseases. As a result, infant mortality has decreased dramatically and life expectancy has increased, but tuberculosis remains a public health problem.

Mission-minded German Mennonites also had a burden to witness to their Spanish and Guarani neighbors. Among the early pioneers were Hans and Susana Wiens and Albert and Anna Enns. After some years of Bible training in Argentina, they began evangelistic activities in Paraguay. Others joined them, and North American mission organizations offered support. By 2008 there were 126 churches in eight of Paraguay's 17 departments (provinces), with a combined membership of 5,300. A 24-hour radio ministry also serves Asunción and surrounding areas with Christian programming, now expanded to include television.

To thank Paraguay for receiving them, as they were, no questions asked, Paraguayan Mennonites in 1953 initiated a mission to serve people suffering from leprosy. Clara and John Schmidt pioneered this work, which continues under Paraguayan direction, with limited outside financing. Known by the road marker at its entrance, Km 81, more than 15,000 names appear on the leprosy register of this world-renowned oasis.

A voluntary service program, Christlicher Dienst (Christian Service) also began in 1953 to staff the new leprosy mission. The focus broadened to address a variety of needs. This included a major role in the rehabilitation of the national psychiatric hospital in Asunción. Now in the third generation, more than 6,000 youth have served in a variety of ministries, including child care, prisons and help to the aged destitute.

Following the expulsion of President Alfredo Stroessner (1954-1989) were reports of as many as 30,000 children on the streets of Asunción. Paraguayan Mennonites did not walk by on the other side. A large-scale program began and continues to serve this need. At the same time, the Mennonite Brethren, with financing from Europe and Canada, built two large schools in Asunción with a combined enrollment of almost 2,000.

As Mennonites became more proficient in Spanish, they were increasingly attracted to business opportunities. In 2008, there were more than 30 German Mennonite-owned businesses in Asunción. Six of the largest firms had sales in excess of $140 million and 2,300 employees. To meet their moral responsibility to their employees, these business owners initiated a service previously unknown in Paraguay. Starting with one part-time chaplain, Capellania Empresarial now has 13 full-time and seven part-time chaplains serving the spiritual and social needs of 3,200 employees and families.

The story of Mennonites in Paraguay is replete with partnerships. First it was MCC and the North American and European mission and service agencies. More recently, 110 business and professional people organized a chapter of Mennonite Economic Development Associates. To assist poor rural families, they established a plant to process casava. In 2006, they returned $3.5 million to 1,800 member families. The program was so successful that another plant is under construction.

In 1994, Mennonites helped begin an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity. By 2008, 568 deserving families had been helped to own and occupy decent houses.

Paraguayan Mennonites are on a journey with an outcome known only to God.

Nevertheless, Paraguayan Mennonites face some steep challenges as they prepare to host the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in July. Economically they are positioned to become increasingly wealthy, in contrast to their neighbors, many of whom live in abject poverty. This increased wealth brings increased secularization. Some decry that the saying "the common good ahead of personal gain" is being inverted. Personal gain is winning at the expense of the common good. The remarkable partnership with their indigenous neighbors is far from over. Finding Christian solidarity with the emerging Paraguayan Latino church is a constant challenge. Relationships with the Catholic Church are potentially fragile as Mennonites come out of their colony enclaves and compete with them for members. Political stability is not assured.

Paraguayan Mennonites are on a journey with an outcome known only to God. Their Russian experience is a reminder of threats beyond human control. Were it possible to gather this multiethnic community, speaking 10 languages, brought together by God's leading, under one tent, their prayer would doubtless be, "Jesus nos guia, Jesu geh voran" (Jesus, go before us).

Edgar Stoesz is author of Like a Mustard Seed: Mennonites in Paraguay *(Herald Press, 2008). This article is adapted from his article "Mennonites in Paraguay: A Brief History" in the Mennonite Central Committee Peace Office Newsletter, January-March 2009.*

A life lived for the poor

Helga Dueck and the School for the Deaf in Filadelfia, Paraguay

by Katherine Arnoldi

Katherine Arnoldi

Friends for life: Helga Dueck and students at the School for the Deaf in Filadelfia, Paraguay.

Paraguay
2009
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Helga Dueck had no idea, when she started out for the Mennonite World Conference in Winnipeg in 1990, how much her life was about to change. She traveled from Filadelfia, Paraguay, on her crutches and her one leg, eager to meet new people, reunite with old friends and attend a special session for people with disabilities. She brought with her an open mind and an open heart.

She came away with a new direction that would lead to a new dream.

God calls a person, and if the person is willing to obey, then they can continue to pray, continue to go forward and not fear but to have confidence in God.—Helga Dueck

"God calls a person, and if the person is willing to obey, then they can continue to pray, continue to go forward and not fear but to have confidence in God," Helga says as she stands, surrounded by adoring children, in front of the place that started as a dream and is now Rayito de Luz, a school for the deaf in Filadelfia that everyone told her was "too big of a project."

indigenous and disabled

The journey from the dream to the reality was not easy but was far from the first challenge that Helga has faced in her 66 years of life.

Her parents had been refugees from Siberia, Russia, and arrived in 1930 in the inhospitable Chaco, a place called the Green Hell, with 120-degree heat, impenetrable thorn bushes, no water, and soil made of clay and sand. In 1931, her parents married and over the years had 10 children, including one they adopted, the daughter of her father's sister, who had died in Russia. Helga developed polio as a small child, and a botched operation at age 12 created even more problems. Still the indefatigable Helga continued her studies, entering the Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Montevideo, Uruguay, despite the condition of her leg and back pain that developed as a result of her use of crutches. The director of the school, Nelson Letwiler, offered to pay for an amputation, but Helga resisted, until a lack of circulation made the amputation unavoidable in her second year of school. Her leg was severed at the hip. Nonetheless, Helga successfully graduated. Her parents offered to give her a salary if she came home, but Helga told them, "I did not learn all I have learned for that," and she found employment at the Mennonite Leper Hospital 81 kilometers from Asunción. There, despite severe pain, she taught for four years at a school for 100 students that had been started by Dr. John and Clara Schmidt.

A doctor told her she would be paralyzed in a few years unless she could get an artificial leg, an impossibility in Paraguay. Nelson Letwiler invited her to come to the United States, but no help was available, so she found her way to Dr. Helmut Huebert in Winnipeg, who managed to arrange for an artificial leg.

But all did not go smoothly. After much struggle, Helga realized she would not be able to use the leg, so, once again on her crutches, she set out to find employment, only to discover how difficult it was for a disabled person to find work. She faced rejection after rejection. Finally, Neil Klassen at the Mennonite Brethren Gospel Light Hour hired her, and she proved to all that her disability did not impair her ability to be an asset to the organization. Ten years later she learned that her boss had put his own job on the line to defend his decision to hire her. Even today this story brings tears to her eyes.

During her employment at the Gospel Light Hour she learned something from Neil Klassen that she carried with her the rest of her life. She noticed that sometimes he went into his office and closed the door for long periods.

"He is not to be disturbed," another worker told her.

"What is he doing?" Helga asked.

"There is a problem he must solve. He is praying," she said.

Helga followed this example when she returned to Paraguay and worked four years as the director of a dormitory of the school at Yalve Sanga, the Indian settlement supported by the Mennonites not far from Filadelfia, four more years as a teacher and one year as the principal of a school she founded that served nine villages.

In 1989, Henry Enns of Mennonite Central Committee came to Paraguay, looking for someone who was disabled who could speak German, Spanish and English and could work for MCC in South America as a spokesperson for disability awareness. Everywhere he went, people recommended Helga to him, and soon Helga was on the way to an orientation and training for this job at the Mennonite World Conference in Winnipeg.

Helga thought often about the Scripture and its meaning for her: 'Open your mouth for the speechless.'

Then her life changed.

As Helga traveled from 1991 to 1995 throughout Paraguay, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile, visiting centers for the disabled, giving speeches about disability awareness and chronicling the conditions and needs of the disabled, she was always moved by the conditions of the deaf children she saw. She often saw deaf children who were given no opportunity to realize their potential, who were sometimes treated no better than pets. She felt she could do something to help them.

And something else kept appearing to Helga. Everywhere, it seemed—in magazines, newspapers and books—Helga noticed over and over Proverbs 31:8-9: "Open your mouth for the speechless."

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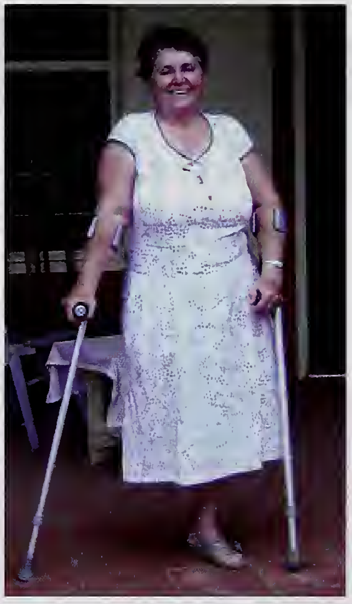

Katherine Arnoldi

Moved by Scripture and prayer: Helga Dueck in front of the School for the Deaf in Filadelfia, Paraguay.

But what could she do? She dreamed of opening a school for the deaf.

She continued to pray about her concerns and her dreams and continued to move forward, to not fear and to have confidence in God. She thought often about the Scripture and its meaning for her: "Open your mouth for the speechless."

"God, if it is only me that wants a deaf school, let me know," Helga prayed. "I cannot do it alone."

In 1994, Helga was invited to attend the Lobetal Institute, a center with 900 patients in Celle, Germany, where she received training about disabled people and was given boxes of supplies and teaching materials to begin her deaf school. In 1995, she visited an MCC-sponsored deaf school in Recife, Brazil, with 100 students, where she furthered her studies. Encouraged, she continued to pray.

> **The students come speaking many languages but learn international sign language. They come to find friends for life.**

And to open her mouth. She visited local churches, government offices and social organizations asking for support. While many agreed about the need for the school, she was told over and over that it was "too big a project at this time."

Then, miraculously, an opportunity appeared. She was urged to run for the Concejal or City Council of Filadelfia, and she won. With that salary she began her school, first in a Sunday school room at a Native Mennonite Church, then at the government school. But soon another problem presented itself. The students came from distant towns and stayed with relatives or host families and were often in unsafe or unstable living situations. Again Helga traveled the roads to ask for a building for her school so she could have dormitory facilities. She sent a fax to Kinderwerk in Filadelfia, an organization in British Columbia that helps children in Paraguay, and heard back from Uwe and Hedy Stahl.

"We will buy you a building," they said, and soon a perfect building was found.

Now the students come because the police have picked up a homeless boy who was sleeping with dogs and discovered he was deaf. The students come because a mother, having heard of the school, arrives with her child and eyes of hope. They come speaking many languages but learn international sign language. They come to find friends for life. They come to find Helga and the teachers, who believe in them and their abilities. They come to find confidence, pride in their accomplishments, hope, fun and inspiration. Graduates of the school are working in the local bakery, working in the supermarket, working in a tile factory. One graduate married a hearing man and has two hearing children she clearly loves.

And the community that told Helga it was too big of a job?

At a recent ceremony marking the end of the school year, the yard of Rayito de Luz is filled to capacity with the people of Filadelfia, the alumni of the school and dignitaries from far and wide. The children sit in their starchy, pressed white shirts and blouses, their dark pants and skirts. They sign songs together, put on a skit, read the lips of Helga while she asks them questions, and they speak aloud their names, beaming with love in their eyes at the woman who started from nothing, nothing but faith, this opportunity to shine.

After the ceremony, an auction of donated items offers everyone a chance to support something that all of Filadelfia now points to with pride, their school for the deaf, Rayito de Luz.

Katherine Arnoldi, Ph.D., is a member of Manhattan (N.Y.) Mennonite Fellowship and a Fulbright Fellow in Paraguay for 2008-09.

Want to know what you can do to help?

More money is needed to support Rayito de Luz for teachers' salaries, teacher training, building expansion and books and supplies. "One March," Helga Dueck says, "I had to gather the teachers and tell them I did not have the money for their salaries for that month. Then I explained that my experience with God was that it will come." Send donations through MCC to: Deaf School, Rayito de Luz, Helga Dueck, Filadelfia, P.O. Box 630, Paraguay, 9300.
—Katherine Arnoldi

Humbly walking the road with God

Katherine Arnoldi

John Mosesso | nbii.gov

Ernesto Unruh: Enlhet leader, pastor, counselor, world traveler, writer and scholar

Paraguay 2009

Mennonite World Conference

Assembly Gathered

by Katherine Arnoldi

If you are looking for Ernesto Unruh, you just may find him on his hands and knees with other members of the congregation, painting the floor of the church in Yalve Sanga, the Chaco, Paraguay. If you have the honor of speaking with him, which you can do at Mennonite World Conference 2009, you will find he will humbly speak of working together with others, of cooperation and harmony.

Yet Ernesto Unruh is an Enlhet indigenous leader, a man of great stature, dignity, poise, grace and diplomacy. A pastor at one of the largest churches in Yalve Sanga, he served for 13 years as president of the Conference of Enlhet Brethren Mennonites, an organization of seven churches with 2,700 members. A graduate of the Bible Institute of Yalve Sanga, he continued his studies for six years after graduation. He has co-written many books, including *Ya'alva Pangcalhva II*, a collection of stories from Enlhet elders, the 903-page *Enlhet Dictionary* and *Lo Que Cuentan los Enlhet, Stories of the Enlhet*, a book published in both Enlhet and Spanish. He has traveled to Europe and Africa as a representative of his church, his people and his country.

Ernesto's father, Francisco, an Enlhet, was given the name of his boss, Mr. Unruh, the owner of a large farm. "My father attended a fiesta and there met my mother, a Nivaclé. I am the third of their 12 children," Ernesto says. "As a boy, I sang in the local choir and at 18 came to the Bible Institute back when the classes were held in a barn." During his years of study he helped build a new building for the institute and began his work with the local church, where, after 10 years, he became a pastor.

It was in 1984 that he, along with two other Enlhet and two Nivaclé, was invited to the Mennonite World Conference in Strasbourg, France. "I saw a different world on that trip," Ernesto says, "I saw many new ideas and activities. I saw people living in big buildings, which is not our custom. We like to live out in the open air, free. I saw people hang gliding, flying in the air great distances." But, most importantly, he met Mennonites from all over the world. "I saw my Mennonite brothers from many different places. I saw people of many different colors who are part of the Mennonite family. I learned about all the diverse Mennonite churches that are equal. I met many people, and we discussed many themes, studied much and thought much together about Christ."

In 2003, he attended the Mennonite World Conference in Zimbabwe. "I saw the African people walking together, singing on the way to church, and we at the conference also walked and sang together the song, 'Walking in the Light of God.'" Ernesto learned about the devastation of AIDS in Africa and saw many people suffering from this disease. Also he was moved by the diversity of the Mennonite congregations. "I met and talked with Africans from many countries."

The community must face these issues together.—Ernesto Unruh

Back home, Ernesto, now 55, continues his work as pastor, traveling long distances to speak with people, offer solace, advice and marriage counseling. He does this work, as he has always done it, without pay. "When we walk on the road with God, we must do it with or without pay."

Elsa, Ernesto's wife, works with women's groups at the church and sings in the 80-member women's choir. She organizes activities, including preparations for Christmas celebrations. They have four children: one daughter and three sons.

While Ernesto sees that the problems now for the Enlhet in Yalve Sanga are basic—food security and water—he sees that in the future, as the population grows, they will need more land to sustain their needs. Unfortunately, all the land around Yalve Sanga is owned by others. "The Cooperative of the Enlhet must work together to buy land." Ernesto says, "The community must face these issues together."

Katherine Arnoldi is a member of Manhattan (N.Y.) Mennonite Fellowship and a Fulbright Fellow to Paraguay 08-09. Melvin Warkentin assisted with this article.

Have a questio

Ask Gundolf Niebuhr when you visit the Jaco

by Katherine Arnoldi

Katherine Arnoldi

Varied experiences: Elizabeth and Gundolf Niebuhr

Their happiest times were yet to come in a place where they would experience their greatest culture shock.

Want to see specimens of 210 species of mammals in the Chaco? Or 250 species of birds? Art objects from the many indigenous tribes? Artifacts from the pioneer days of the Mennonite colonies? How about bones of a Mastodon? Or a coin from the 15th century, probably dropped by conquistadores on their way to the Inca Empire in search of gold? When you come to the Chaco, before or after the Mennonite World Conference, your first stop will most assuredly be the Jacob Unger Museum in Filadelfia.

There to guide you on your discoveries will be Gundolf Niebuhr, curator of the museum and director of the Archives of Fernheim Colony, who will soon impart to you his love of the Chaco, its people, history, cultures, flora and fauna.

His own story is as interesting as the museum and as varied, with one culture shock after another.

Gundolf's grandfather worked in the very building that now houses the museum back when it was the Administrative Center of Filadelfia. His mother was 9 years old when her family came to the Mennonite colonies in the Chaco in 1930 from refugee camps in Germany. His father came two years later, part of the Harbiner group that had fled toward China from the Ukraine and central Siberia, crossing the Amur River, then passing though France. "When I was young, we used to go to the Indian Village on Sunday to the soccer games, and as a family we spoke with many of the indigenous, who spoke Plautdeutch. I saw many attractions in their way of life and looking at the world." When Gundolf was 12, the family moved from small town, subarid, tropical Filadelfia, where he was born in 1957, to urban life in temperate Vancouver, B.C. After high school, he returned to Filadelfia with his family and worked as an electrician for four years. During this time he was baptized at the General Conference Mennonite Church and felt called to the ministry, so he studied at the Mennonite Bible Seminary in San Lorenzo, close to Asunción. There he met and soon married Elizabeth Funk, who was in the church music program and whose family had been refugees from the Ukraine during World War II, helped by Peter Dyck to make their way to Paraguay, where they settled in Volandam. She graduated in 1980 but stayed on studying piano and working at the seminary's library while they lived in a small apartment. "We have fond recollections of this time in our lives," Gundolf says. "The entire operations at the seminary were small then, and even San Lorenzo was much smaller, more tranquil."

But their happiest times were yet to come in a place where they would experience their greatest culture

about the Chaco?

nger Museum in Filadelfia, Paraguay.

shock. In 1984, Gundolf graduated, and they set off for Yalve Sanga, the settlement of Nivaclé and Enlhet indigenous tribes just south of Filadelfia, where Gundolf taught at the Bible school and Elizabeth led a music program. “It was a fruitful experience to be asked questions about myself from a completely different cultural perspective,” Gundolf says. “As long as you move in your own context, you are never really aware of your own conditioning.”

Ready for yet another culture shock, Gundolf, now an ordained minister, and Elizabeth wanted to keep growing and learning. In 1986, they and their new daughter moved to Elkhart, Ind., where he attended Mennonite Biblical Seminary while Elizabeth studied the organ. “Although I had studied the piano for many years, studying the organ with Orlando Schmidt was exciting because it was a different method.” She often stole away to the chapel at midnight in order to find time to practice. The couple spent their summers on pastoral internships in Newton, Kan. “I noticed quickly that seminary studies were demanding,” Gundolf says. “The time at the seminary was intense.” The cross-cultural experience at Yalve Sanga motivated him to study anthropology at Notre Dame for one summer, too.

Next it was back to Yalve Sanga, where, from 1989 until 1995, Gundolf again taught school, this time at the new Teacher’s College, which he began along with Carlos Giesbrecht. Today, because of this school, nearly all the elementary school teachers in the native settlements are indigenous, as are many of the secondary school teachers. “Due to the new constitution in 1992, there was a new openness at the time for new models of teaching,” Gundolf says, and they invited elders in the community to come to the classroom and share their stories and theories on the education of young people. “It was a time when the entire community participated in education.” Discussions took place around fires on weekend camping trips, where students felt free to question, explore and debate pedagogies they were studying in the classroom. He began with Carlos Giesbrecht an NGO called Communidad de Indigenous, which Giesbrecht still facilitates.

Andrea Grosse | nbii.gov

In 1995, Gundolf experienced yet another culture shock as he moved back to the town of his birth and childhood, and began working at the archives and then the museum. Now he is busy with plans to expand the museum to a now-vacant school building close by. “I would like to see the ethnological section enlarged and for the natural history section to include botany and more animals from the Chaco,” Gundolf says. Another project is the excavation of a precolonial indigenous site on the estancia of Fritz Hoeck, who has carefully protected the site. “This would entail an archeology department at a major university undertaking the project,” Gundolf says. He now greets 2,000-3,000 visitors a year at the museum from as far away as New Zealand and Australia, although most visitors are from Brazil, Argentina, North America and Europe.

Thanks to Mennonite World Conference, the museum is about to host visitors from the four corners of the earth.

Soon, thanks to Mennonite World Conference, the museum is about to host visitors from the four corners of the earth. And, by the way, when you are at the Jakob Unger Museum, be sure to look at the heavy wool coat with its fur collar and fur hat the unsuspecting Mennonite refugees brought with them to this, the Torrid Weather Zone, in the Chaco.

Katherine Arnoldi, the author of two books, is a member of Manhattan (N.Y.) Mennonite Fellowship and currently a Fulbright Fellow in Paraguay.

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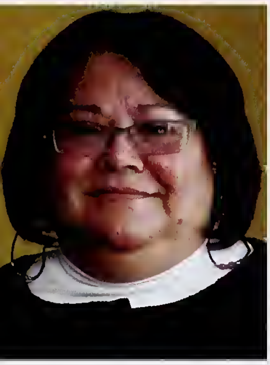
What's a leader to do?



Iris de León Hartshorn is director of intercultural relations for Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership.

Mennonite Church USA has committed itself to being "missional." What does that mean? And what is the responsibility of leadership in leading the church into being missional?

A simple explanation of being missional is this: As the church, we join God in reconciling a broken world. It's about God's activity, not ours, and God is leading. So what's a church leader's responsibility? It is to create an environment for discernment, learning, imagination and risk taking to empower the church to engage with God in reconciling a broken world. It's easier said than done, but it's possible.

Leaders must encourage taking risks and assure our agencies, conferences and congregations God will be there through success and failure.

Discernment takes time, and it's an important practice for church leaders, even with our busyness. It takes a commitment to pray together and listen to each other. It also takes time for paths to appear in the direction God is calling us. I look to the way leaders in my home congregation have led through difficult decisions. Answers haven't come quickly, but I feel confident God has led the process. Discernment may mean meeting in small groups so people can speak more comfortably. There may be times of prayer and fasting, times that create spaces for people to process what they've heard and be still, listening to God. Other times it may mean just taking a walk to discover what God is doing.

We often think of schools as *the* place for a learning community. We should also see our faith community as a learning community. In listening to God and connecting with each other, we learn and discover together. It's not just about head learning but also heart and soul learning. We need to engage in the world and see how God is being revealed. One day on my way to work in Houston, a pink Cadillac was in front of me. In the nearly freezing weather a homeless man was walking across the street. I thought, Wow, he must be cold. His clothes were tattered, and he was coatless. All of a sudden, the woman in the Cadillac jumped out, took off her full-length fur coat and gave it to the man. That was a learning event of my heart and soul. How do we share stories of what God is doing and learn as a community? How do we engage learning events together?

The third element is imagination. Being missional means being able to imagine what we think is not possible. God does the impossible and has given us the ability to imagine so we can engage in the work of the impossible. I have learned that I have to exercise my imagination. I do this by setting my mind on Yes, that is possible, and avoid saying no. Saying yes to our imagination allows God's creativity to flourish in our minds and in our faith communities. When someone shares an idea that we first want to oppose with, That's impossible, what if we said, Wow, that's great. How can I help you? We could unleash God's power in a dynamic way. Leaders need to say yes to creative, imaginative ideas, even when they seem impossible.

Risk goes hand in hand with discernment, learning and imagination. The permission and support to take risks are crucial for the missional church. Risk involves success and failure. My youngest daughter never wanted to take risks as a child. When she was learning to skate or ride her bike, she wanted me to promise she wouldn't fall. She wanted success without failure. My husband and I had to do a lot of convincing that it was OK to fall, and we would be there with her if she did. Leaders must encourage taking risks and assure our agencies, conferences and congregations God will be there through success and failure. From our failures, we'll create learning opportunities that give us a chance to exercise our imagination and discern where God is leading.

Being missional is messy and risky, but it's also a wonderful opportunity "to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world."

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Green shoots rising in a resurrection garden**—Marlene Kropf
- **Once for all**—Darrin Belousek

Committee looks for new MC USA leader

Wants counsel about job description; invites nominations for top staff position

The search committee for the next executive director of Mennonite Church USA is making progress, having held three meetings so far. To date, the committee has developed positive working relationships, adopted a checklist of steps to guide its process, issued a call to prayer, reviewed the compensation package and developed a preliminary job description for testing and feedback across the church. A commitment has been made to provide discernment materials in both English and Spanish.

The committee is asking for comments and suggestions for the job description and is inviting the entire church to assist with the discernment process through prayer, feedback and by suggesting candidates who could provide dynamic and Spirit-filled leadership for the denomination.

According to the job description being created by the committee, the new executive director will lead Mennonite Church USA toward a Christ-centered spirituality and missional calling and will do the following:

- inspire Mennonite Church USA through a compelling articulation of the vision, mission and priorities of the church;
- form and lead an Executive Leadership team that empowers Mennonite Church USA to join in God's activity in the world and achieves outcomes established by the Executive Board;
- serve as the chief executive officer and primary public spokesperson of Mennonite Church USA;
- ensure strategic alignment in denominational efforts on the churchwide priorities of witness, antiracism, leadership development and global connections;
- perform such other responsibilities as requested by the Executive Board.

A form has been developed to guide individuals or groups to provide feedback to the committee, including responses to the proposed job description. In a memo distributed on Feb. 27 to area conferences, agencies and constituency groups, the committee also invited respondents to make nominations for the position. The memo lists four channels for communicating with the committee via member Richard Thomas:

- regular mail to Richard Thomas, 2176 Lincoln Highway East, Lancaster, PA, 17602;
- email at thomasjr@lancastermennonite.org;
- fax to 717-299-0823;
- the following link and form at www.mennoniteusa.org/Default.aspx?tabid=891.

To ensure broad conversation, committee members are making phone contact with people across the church. These include young adults and people in the pew who are not in churchwide or conference leadership positions.

A flexible timeline has been adopted; the committee is working to move as quickly as possible while assuring adequate process and discernment. Although naming the new executive director by the convention in Columbus, Ohio, in July would be "terrific," the committee says, finding the right person for this position is top priority.

"These are difficult times in many ways, and yet this is a time for Mennonite Church USA to shine even more brightly than it has before, and we will," says committee chair and Mennonite Church USA moderator-elect Ed Diller. "The search committee is confident that God will lead us to the right person to assume the significant role of executive director and that that person will find his or her way to us."

Other committee members are Glen Guyton, Charlotte Hardt, Sue Miller, Juanita Nunez, Dave Sutter, Patty Shelly, Dick Thomas, Keith Weaver and Sharon Waltner.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA

Essential qualifications for success are:

- Spiritual maturity and a pastoral presence
- Commitment to *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*
- Understanding of Mennonite Church USA theology, history, cultures and demographic trends (cultural competence)
- Demonstrated effectiveness in developing an antiracist corporate culture
- Pastoral experience or clear capacity for church leadership
- Strong relational skills and a collegial style of leadership
- Optimism and a sense of humor
- Strong oral and written communication skills that inspire others
- Willingness and ability to travel
- Ability to connect with people of all ages
- Commitment to the whole church at all its levels
- Ability to work out of the Elkhart, Ind., or Newton, Kan., office

Additional gifts/abilities that are desirable:

- Ability to initiate and lead sustainable change
- Experience in developing relationships/communication with multiple racial/ethnic groups (perhaps in languages other than English)
- History of connection with youth and young adults
- Theological studies
- Ministerial credentials
- Organizational, management and administrative skills
- Business or nonprofit leadership experience
- Leadership in advancement activities for the church

Source: Search Committee for Mennonite Church USA Executive Secretary

Some stores in the West resist contract

Forty-nine Ten Thousand Villages stores have already committed to signing.

Three stores in the West are not willing to sign Ten Thousand Villages' new contract; two others are deciding whether they will comply. The new contract requires 80 percent of each store's purchases to come from the company's product line—along with requiring other computer software upgrades and remodeling requirements.

In an article entitled "10,000 Villages' New Contract Causes Difficulty for Some Stores" published in the Winter 2009 issue of *Evangel*, Susan McCarthy Palmer writes: "[The stores not signing will] still carry crafts from artisans represented by Ten Thousand Villages, they say, but the requirement to buy more than 80 percent of their product … has made it impossible for them to afford carrying the Ten Thousand Villages name and remain viable as businesses."

Evangel is the quarterly newsletter published by Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference.

"We wanted to have a uniform contract for all our stores," said Kristen Jenkins, media relations for Ten Thousands Villages on Feb. 20. Currently Ten Thousand Villages has contracts that vary from 70 to 85 percent in their requirements for stores' purchases to come from their product line. But the new contract now requires all Ten Thousand Villages stores to purchase 80 percent.

Jenkins said the intent of the new contract is to support artisans who make the products.

According to Craig Schloneger, CEO of Ten Thousand Villages, there have been varying responses to the new contract. But 49 stores have signed or have given a verbal commitment that they will sign the new contract.

We really prefer to stay a Ten Thousand Villages store. We are really hoping that some changes can be made.
—Martha Detweiler

"We are pleased that the vast majority of stores have signed the contract as this helps us strengthen our relationships with artisans around the world," said Schloneger on March 4.

Schloneger said the stores in Boise, Idaho; La Junta, Colo., and Salem, Ore., have indicated they will not sign the contract, and two others are undecided.

Stores must sign the contract by April 1 or they will be classified as wholesale accounts with Ten Thousand Villages. That means they cannot use Ten Thousand Villages in their name.

"There is no requirement for profits to return to Ten Thousand Villages," he said. "The board of directors for each store decides what to do with the profits."

Martha Detweiler, a member of the board for the gift and thrift store in Lebanon, Ore., said the Lebanon store will not sign the contract as it currently stands; she said their refusal is an act of solidarity with the other stores that oppose the new contract.

Detweiler said on Feb. 24 that the financial requirements were not the problem—as joint gift and thrift stores have lower profit requirements, and the Lebanon. Ore., store meets them. Also, the store needed to be remodeled anyway, so they decided to follow many of Ten Thousand Villages' requirements.

She said it's the implications of the contract.

"I don't want to be like a franchise store," she said. "I don't think that's the goal of what Ten Thousand Villages is … that's the reason we haven't signed it. We really prefer to stay a Ten Thousand Villages store. We are really hoping that some changes can be made, that they can become more flexible with the stores and listen to us. Our preference would be to stay with them and not just become a wholesale account."

Ellen Chambers, a member of the Salem, Ore., store board, said they tried to communicate with Ten Thousand Villages' national office in Akron, Pa., to negotiate the contract but had to focus on keeping their own store viable. At this point, the store plans not to sign the contract and will become a wholesale account.

"The contract expectations were very challenging for us to work with," she said on Feb. 25. "We felt that the process was not collaborative."

In addition to supporting the artisans, Chambers said they have a commitment to paying their own staff fairly.

"We have always been very proud to be part of Ten Thousand Villages," she said, "and would never have made the choice to no longer carry the name except for the changes that were coming as shown in the contract. If we could have remained part of Ten Thousand Villages, we would have been most happy to do that. There's certainly some sadness."

"Although the 80 percent requirement is a problem, the main issue is the new corporate retail direction that Akron management is imposing," said Russ Buschert, board member of the Boise store on March 5.

Buschert also invites people to visit this blog: http://concernedvillagers.blogspot.com.—*Anna Groff*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

Indiana and Brooklyn churches connect

Both congregations send members on trips to serve and learn from each other.

What began as a connection among youth at a Mennonite Church USA convention has turned into a relationship of equals for Iglesia Unida de Avivamiento (United Revival Mennonite Church) in Brooklyn, N.Y., and Clinton Frame Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind. The connection has helped both churches consider their mission to one another and to the world.

Over the last two years, one set of Brooklyn Mennonites from Unida de Avivamiento has spent time in Indiana while two Goshen groups from Clinton Frame have visited the city. The Clinton Frame groups left home intending to focus their labor on Unida de Avivamiento's building. They returned speaking the language of relationship.

"They thought they were going to raise a barn in an empty lot," says Moises Angustia, one of the ministers at Unida de Avivamiento. "They found a ministry running full-tilt."

In both locations, locals prepared and shared meals; visitors and hosts communed around tables. Angustia says the conversations became intimate.

"We saw them for who they were. They saw us for who we were," he says.

The trips did allow some work to be done, especially in Brooklyn. Volunteers painted rooms for youth and children, cleaned up an empty lot now being used as a community garden, and worked on an Unida de Avivamiento building project that has been growing for eight years.

The point, however, was less about the labor than the learning.

Angustia says the trip to Indiana helped dispel some of the stereotypes church members had developed from hearing news reports on issues and violence in suburban and rural areas.

"We must build the bridges from inner city to suburban areas," Angustia says.

Similarly, the visits to Brooklyn have helped educate Clinton Frame members about the reality of city life and realities within the congregation. Clinton Frame representatives say they learned about faith and focus from their Brooklyn friends.

"We're being stretched when we see their congregation and the vision that they have," says Terry Diener, lead pastor at Clinton Frame.

Angustia was equally impressed with Clinton Frame. "The Latino church has heard that faith can get you the documents or a better job position," he says, "Faith can get your relatives out of their country and bring them here for a better job possibility. What we learned from Clinton Frame [was] the faith of kindness and generosity."

Sara Yoder of Clinton Frame visited Brooklyn in late 2008 with her women's accountability group and has this observation: "I think we always think when we get more money, then we can get a bigger house or a nicer car. Their focus is more on building up their church and reaching out to the unsaved, especially to their local community."

Danny Angustia of Unida de Avivamiento traveled to Indiana in 2007.

"I saw their humbleness," he says. "You have to always serve. That's something I learned from Clinton Frame."

Diener says Clinton Frame, due to its size and location, has more resources to draw on than Unida de Avivamiento, but it does not serve as a benefactor. Mennonite presence in urban communities is vital for the future of the church, Diener says, but it is out of rural Clinton Frame's reach. This partnership allows its members to be involved in a vibrant urban ministry.

The Goshen church also talks about reaching out in its own area. Connecting with Unida de Avivamiento energizes them for local action and allows them to support urban outreach. Moises Angustia says money is not the main mark of ministry. Unida de Avivamiento, 350-strong, has balanced its $300,000 budget for five consecutive years thanks to God's provision.

Though its eight-year building project is still ongoing, strong support from the congregation, with backing from MMA, Eastern Mennonite Missions and others, is helping it near completion. The church's volunteer leaders not only survive but thrive. The congregations exchange bulletins and prayer requests. And because of the connection, Clinton Frame is interacting with True Vine Tabernacle in Elkhart, Ind., led by former Brooklynite Nancy Rodriguez-Lora.—*Laurie Oswald Robinson*

We always think when we get more money, then we can get a bigger house or a nicer car. Their focus is more on building up their church.
—Sara Yoder

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Five churches to fund MWC delegate

Indiana and Michigan churches each gave $500 for Congolese leader's trip.

Ndandula Vincent, a Mennonite leader from the Congo, will go to Mennonite World Conference's (MWC) Assembly 15 in Paraguay in July this year.

Five churches in Indiana and Michigan each contributed $500 toward making his trip possible.

Ndandula is the coordinator of education and schools for the Mennonite Churches of Congo.

Eldon Stoltzfus, pastor of Forks Mennonite Church in Middlebury, Ind., says he is delighted the money will help a Congolese Mennonite. Stoltzfus served in the Congo from 1969 to 1971 with Pax, a Mennonite Central Committee program that provided alternative service opportunities for young conscientious objectors during the Korean and Vietnam wars.

Stoltzfus helped in the technical services department of the Universite Libre du Congo in Kisangani.

The other four churches who joined Forks in this sponsorship are Emma Mennonite Church in Topeka, Ind.; Locust Grove Mennonite Church in Sturgis, Mich.; Pleasant View Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., and Shore Mennonite Church in Shipshewana, Ind.

Several men from these churches also served with Pax in areas where there are now Congolese Mennonite churches.

The sponsorship plan began with the Forks Missions Committee when information from MWC presented the challenge to assist someone unable to attend Assembly 15 without help.

After prayer and reflection, the church asked the four congregations to join them so together they could raise $2,500 by September 2008. All agreed to do so. And they did.

How did Forks meet its $500 challenge? The congregation invites neighbors, family and friends to an annual missions fund-raising dinner and evening of music, where they also set up displays of missions projects and organizations the church supports.

Currently the projects include work in South Africa and in French-speaking countries as well as ministry in Moldova, a former Soviet state in Eastern Europe, and local food and shelter ministries. The church decided to designate $500 from the proceeds of the 2008 fund-raiser for an MWC registrant for Assembly 15.

Forks also hoped to help one of its members attend Assembly 15 in Paraguay, but the economic downturn in the United States has now put that plan in jeopardy.

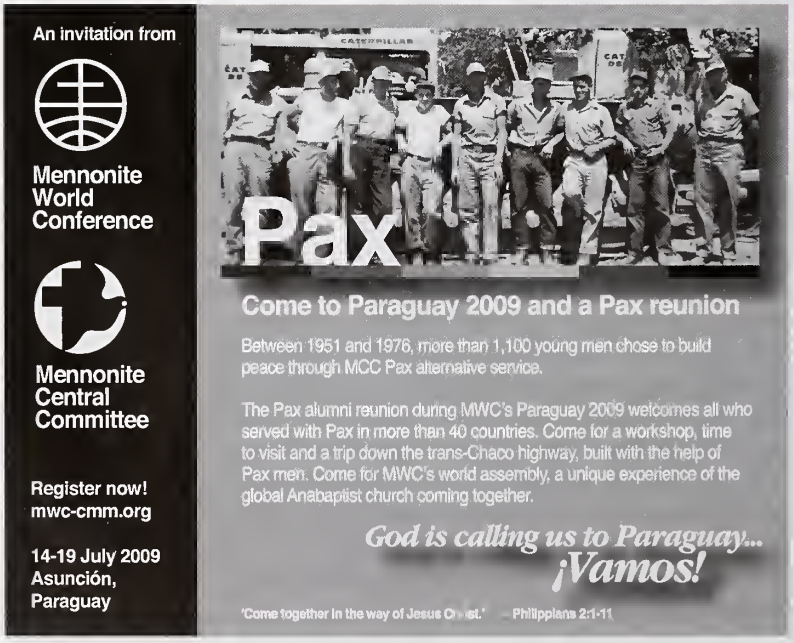
Plans for Ndandula's trip may include a visit to northern Indiana and Michigan after the Paraguay assembly. It is hoped that additional congregations in the area with ties to Congo will assist the five congregations in planning and funding this part of the visit.

The collaboration of these five churches is a model that other congregations may still adopt to send someone from their area to Paraguay, since tough economic times may make it difficult for one church to fund a delegate.

Registrations for Assembly 15 continue to be accepted and will be for the next several months. However, participants' preferences for lodging and other services are more likely to be accommodated if they register as soon as possible. Visit www.mwc-cmm.org or contact any MWC office for information.—*Ferne Burkhardt of Mennonite World Conference*

National identity issue

Copies of the Feb. 3 issue of *The Mennonite* are still available for small group and congregational study. This special 40-page issue was created by Executive Leadership to help prepare delegates for the Delegate Assembly in Columbus, Ohio, June 30-July 5. To order copies call 800-790-2498 or email your order to Subscriptions@TheMennonite.org.



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TheMennonite

Health-care workers to gather

Health-care workers from around the world will gather July 15-16 in Paraguay in conjunction with Paraguay 2009, Mennonite World Conference's (MWC) Assembly 15.

Health care was among the earliest services developed by Mennonite immigrants who settled in Paraguay. The renowned leprosy hospital east of Asunción has gained respect throughout the country for its innovative treatment of victims of leprosy, reinstating them into their communities.

"We in the Mennonite Medical Association," says Sam Showalter, executive secretary of Mennonite Medical Association, "believe this will be a very important opportunity to interact with our peers from many cultures as we, along with the Mennonite Nurses Association, are studying the possible formation of a larger organized fellowship of Anabaptist health-care team members."

The meetings, from 1-4:30 p.m. on both days, are open to anyone in health-care professions. The meetings will be held at the Hospital of Foundation Vision at Fernando de la Mora. Spanish will be the primary language, with English translation available.

Key planners, along with Ray Brubacher and Albert Lobe from MWC, are Wilhelm Schröder and Wesley Schmidt, both doctors in Paraguay; Carlos Wiens a health administrator in the former Duarte government in Paraguay; and Art Friesen from Abbotsford, B.C., who represents MMA. They hope for 50 or more registrants.

For more information, go to http://www.mwc-cmm.org.—*Ferne Burkhardt of Mennonite World Conference*

> We are studying the possible formation of a larger organized fellowship of Anabaptist health-care team members.
> —Sam Showalter

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MCC faces global economic downturn

International program-spending cut by $2 million in upcoming fiscal year.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) may have been "cash rich" last June, but that statement is no longer true. Amid the global economic crisis, the organization is reducing its budget in the coming year.

The budget for MCC's international program, will be reduced by about $2 million, and administrative expenditures are also being cut, according to the organization. Overall, the total budget for MCC Binational, which runs international programs, will shrink by 10 percent.

We're all frantically busy trying to rearrange budgets that we thought were in order [at] Christmas.
—Arli Klassen

"I think we're all frantically busy trying to rearrange budgets that we thought were in order [at] Christmas," said Arli Klassen, MCC's Binational executive director at the end of January, "and doing it quickly without as much consultation and discussion as we'd like. But I think people are working together as a strong team and [are] committed to finding ways to move ahead."

MCC U.S. and the regional MCCs in the United States are facing a 9 percent reduction. "All I can say is that we're cutting $2 million out of international programming, and that is going to affect our partners," Klassen said.

MCC Canada and provincial MCCs are also facing budget cuts. However, because the fiscal year for MCCs in Canada ends Aug. 31, as opposed to March 31 in the United States, it is not yet clear what the size of the budget cuts in Canada will be.

"We've developed a threefold approach to this, or, if you want, a stool with three legs," said Don Peters, MCC Canada's executive director, in February, when asked how MCC Canada expects to weather the economic storm. The first approach is working to invite people to contribute to the work of MCC. The second is reassessing budgets, reducing expenditures and deferring expenses that can be deferred. The third approach is using reserves when necessary.

"Through a combination of those three [approaches], we think we're sitting on a stable stool," Peters said.

MCC Canada has committed to sending $12.5 million Cdn to MCC Binational during MCC Canada's current fiscal year, not including the funding it receives from Canadian International Development Agency, a federal government program. It is behind in revenue compared to last year, but it still expects to meet its commitment to MCC Binational by the end of August.

"We've got challenges ahead of us, but we have eight months to address this situation, so I'm cautiously optimistic," Peters said. (In its last fiscal year, MCC Canada committed to sending just over $11 million Cdn but sent over $12 million Cdn.)

While more people are giving money to support MCC's work than in previous years, the average contribution decreased in 2008. Peters said the value of contributions from Canada was reduced because of the recent sharp drop in the value of the Canadian dollar relative to the U.S. dollar. Nearly half of MCC Binational's funding for its international program comes from Canadian contributions made in Canadian dollars, while MCC Binational's budget and spending is in U.S. dollars.

MCC's financial reserves were also reduced by losses in financial markets. MCC's investments have been made in accordance with a policy recommended by the audit and finance committee of the MCC Binational board, which the board approved, Klassen said.

"On the whole, MCC is known for being more cautious than aggressive in how we use the money that has been given us," she said, adding that each MCC has its own reserve. MCC Binational started its fiscal year with 3.8 months worth of average spending in reserves; it hopes to end this March with 2.5 months left.

Peters also commented on MCC Binational board member Ryan Showalter's comment at last June's board meetings: "We are cash rich but people poor."

"MCC is now in a situation where we are no longer cash rich, and we hope that we have enough reserves to make it through," Peters said. "And we're counting on the constituency to make sure the work of MCC continues."—*Aaron Epp of the* Canadian Mennonite

Pastors should tend their flocks, not their health bills

As many as 100 pastors in Mennonite Church USA have little or no health care coverage. Together, we can do something about this crisis.

The Corinthian Plan is a new employee benefit program for Mennonite Church USA congregations. It can ensure that all pastors and church staff have access to health coverage and other benefits, regardless of their congregations' financial situations.

Congregations have until Oct. 1, 2009, to decide whether to participate. Don't delay. Visit **www.CorinthianPlan.com**

Juanita and Eligio Nunez, co-pastors of Ebenezer Christian Church, Apopka, Fla. Neither Juanita nor Eligio, have health insurance.

The Corinthian Plan
Together, providing health care for pastors and church workers

Mennonite Church USA

School a seedbed for doctors in India

Mennonite partners hoped for 85 students at new school; 140 enrolled.

Tushar Kanti Naik

Lubna Khatri and Asutosh Agrawal during a performance at St. Stephen's Model School inauguration.

Mennonite partners who organized a new English-language school in Jagdeeshpur, India, hoped for 85 students in the first year. More than 140 enrolled.

The new St. Stephen's Model School that began on the ground floor of Sewa Bhawan Hospital in the 2008-2009 school year is more than an educational facility; it is a ministry. Leaders from the area church, school and hospital hope English instruction prepares students both for higher education and more prestigious careers and for learning a bit about God.

The school is a combined effort from Sewa Bhawan Hospital and Emmanuel Hospital Association; Bharatiyah General Conference Mennonite Church; Evangelical Trust Association of North India; Menno Christian Education Society; and St. Stephen's Group of Schools (part of the Church of North India).

For the first year, classes are offered from nursery classes through fourth grade. Administrators hope to increase the grades over time.

Tushar Naik, Sewa Bhawan Hospital director, says English education is now optional in the Chhattisgarh province, which means anyone wanting to learn or perfect their English-language skills must pay for the instruction. St. Stephen's, Naik says, offers a sliding scale based on income so that English is offered both to those who can afford to pay for it and those who cannot.

The response from the community, Naik says, has been inspiring. More than 500 people attended an inauguration ceremony in the fall.

"There is no other alternative for our children," he says. The Rev. P.K. Bagh, chairman of Bharatiyah General Conference Mennonite Church, says the school and partnership are important for the future of the church. Naik says the same holds true for the hospital. Jagdeeshpur students who are taught in English will have opportunities to continue to college and postgraduate work, which is primarily taught in English, Naik says. Ideally, he says, these children will become the next generation of Indian doctors to work at Sewa Bhawan Hospital, where Naik and his wife, Kanchan, are the only two full-time physicians.

The Jagdeeshpur area already has a strong literacy rate, compared with other parts of the country, Naik says. An improving local economy means more and more students are ready for additional educational opportunities.

The school offers an optional course that teaches stories about Jesus as well as morale-building stories from other faiths. In general, Naik says, students learn more about Christian belief at St. Stephen's than in other schools. Assemblies include Bible verses, Christian songs and the Lord's Prayer.

"As the teachers are from all faiths," Naik says, "it is not a practice to preach the faith of any religion. But all the teachers are repeatedly reminded and encouraged to practice Christ's love to children and others. God started something wonderful here."

The wonders may expand. Bharatiyah General Conference Mennonite Church has proposed starting another St. Stephen's school at a church complex in nearby Saraipali for next school year.

Sewa Bhawan Hospital sits just yards away from Jansen Memorial School—another Mennonite school started by local leaders and former General Conference Mennonite mission workers, now run by MCES for students in upper grades. Mennonites also started the hospital.

It is not a practice to preach the faith of any religion. But all the teachers are repeatedly reminded and encouraged to practice Christ's love to children.—Tushar Naik

Menno Christian Education Society, Emmanuel Hospital Administration and Evangelical Trust Association of North India are trusts that administer former North American Mennonite mission schools, hospitals and land holdings in the area.

Mennonite Mission Network is a partner to the Mennonite organizations involved in the school collaboration.—*Ryan Miller of Mennonite Mission Network*

CALENDAR

The 7th Annual Regional Men's Chorus Celebration will be held at the **Weaverland Mennonite Church**, 210 Weaverland Valley Road, East Earl, Pa., on March 29.

Sound in the Lands 09 at **Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario**, June 4-8, 2009. A sequel to the acclaimed music festival and academic conference held at Grebel in 2004. This year's festival celebrates and explores Mennonite-related music across borders and boundaries. Discounts will be applied to those who register for Sounds in the Lands 09 before May 4, 2009. Registration information can be found at grebel.uwaterloo.ca/soundinthelands.

WORKERS

Ebersole, Phil, ended a term as pastor at Peace Mennonite Community Church, Aurora, Colo., on July 21, 2008, and is pastor of a church start, The Bridge, in Denver, Colo.

Epp, Amy, was ordained as associate pastor at Seattle Mennonite Church, Seattle. Wash., Feb. 22.

Estrada, Victor, was ordained as pastor at Iglesia Menonita Roca de Salvacion, Aurora, Ore., Feb. 1.

Rosenberger, Phil, was ordained as pastor at Light of Life Mennonite Church, Farmington, N.M., on Feb. 8.

Roth, Brad, was ordained as pastor at Warden Mennonite Church, Warden, Wash., on Jan. 18.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Alderfer, Isabel Marie, Feb. 17, to Dale and Mary Schmidt Alderfer, Newton, Kan.

Crouse, Bridget Grace, Feb. 4, to Kevin and Rebecca Kane Crouse, Gordonville, Pa.

Fielitz, Mia Grace, Feb. 25, to Dan and Melissa Cuenot Fielitz, Dalton, Ohio.

Gouldey, Eden Savannah, Feb. 6, to Bruce and Rhonda Leatherman Gouldey, Green Lane, Pa.

Hiebert, Jackson Jon, Jan. 16, to Bradley and Sara Unruh Hiebert, Newton, Kan.

Litwiller, Joseph Duane, Feb. 10, to Jason and Angela Tackett Litwiller, Hopedale, Ill.

Martin, Miriam Noelle, Dec. 23, 2008, to Alan and Christiane Haroun Martin, Waterloo, Ontario.

Miller, Preston Eigsti, Feb. 17, to Brian and Janice Eigsti Miller, Goshen, Ind.

Nafziger, Adelynn Grace, Jan. 9, to Steve and Laura Kauffman Nafziger, Wauseon, Ohio.

Nickel, Corynn Jade, Dec. 15, 2008, to Kevin and Yvette Peters Nickel, Newton, Kan.

Schmidt, Natalia Kathryn, Feb. 14, to Wesley and Laura Bergey Schmidt, Perkasie, Pa.

Schmidt, Trevor Dean, Dec. 23, 2008, to Van and Brenda Graham Schmidt, Newton, Kan.

Short, Bennett Cole, Feb. 9, to Jonathan and Angela White Short, Fresno, Calif.

Spohn, Jacob William, Feb. 4, to Scott and Katie Kastanek Spohn, Friend, Neb.

DEATHS

Brallier, Mary Knepp, 103, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 24. Spouse: Loren J. Brallier (deceased). Parents: Peter and Mary Gingerich Knepp. Funeral: March 3 at North Goshen Mennonite Church.

Buckwalter, Galen N., 77, Chambersburg, Pa., died Feb. 21. Spouse: Gladys Lehman Buckwalter. Parents: Park Leroy and Melinda Smoker Buckwalter. Child: Gregg; three grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 28 at Marion Mennonite Church, Chambersburg.

TMail
An e-zine of The Mennonite magazine
King reflected 'danger of gospel message,' EMU grad
Peace lamps challenge Mennonite Church USA
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Burkholder, Harold E., 77, Baltimore, Md., died Jan. 15 of complications from a stroke. Spouse: Mary Jane Myers Burkholder. Parents: Clarence A. and Blanche Herr Burkholder. Children: J. Michael, David K., Ruth Ann Gochnauer, Barbara Sue Liberto; 16 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Jan. 24 at Catonsville, Md.

Christophel, Warren H., 92, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 16. Spouse: M. Lucille Troyer Christophel (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Mary Hartman Christophel. Children: Janice Langstaff, Joseph; six grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 20 at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Fast, Edward Arthur, 76, Butterfield, Minn., died Feb. 20 of cancer. Spouse: Gladys Rosella Schmidt Fast. Parents: John and Helena and John Vogt Fast. Children: LaVonne Jungas, DeLyle, LaRoy; seven grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 23 at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, Minn.

Goossen, Edgar Leon, 83, Windom, Minn., died Jan. 26. Spouse: Ione Rassler Krause (deceased). Parents: Jacob A. and Helen J. Derksen Goossen. Children: Nancy Sell, Neil Krause; nine grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; nine great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 30 at LaCanne Family Funeral Service, Windom.

Graber, Ryan Scott, 23, Hurley, S.D., died Feb. 12 in a farm accident. Parents: Calvin Scott and Linda Thompson Graber. Siblings: Tracy Petersen, Kayla Graber, Katelyn Graber. Funeral: Feb. 17 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Hershberger, Irene, 89, Walnut Creek, Ohio, died Feb. 25. Parents: Homer and Leora Hostetler Hershberger. Funeral: Feb. 28 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church.

Kauffman, Dorothy Dick Preheim, 94, Freeman, S.D., died Dec. 9, 2008. Spouse: Ralph Kauffman (deceased). Spouse: Clifford Preheim (deceased). Parents: John and Marie Heinz Dick. Funeral: Dec. 13 at Walter Funeral Home, Freeman.

Kulp, Gladys Derstine, 88, Harrisonburg, Va., died Feb. 14. Spouse: Floyd G. Kulp. Parents: Edwin A. and Elizabeth Krupp Derstine. Children: James D., Donald D., Janice Kulp Long; eight grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 20 at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va.

Landes, Ruth M. Allebach, 80, Franconia, Pa., died Feb. 13. Spouse: Curtis H. Landes. Parents: Paul and Mamie Moyer Allebach. Children: David, Jane Leatherman, Marlene Clemmer, Lisa Yoder, Alan; 10 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 20 at Franconia Mennonite Church.

"For the Record" is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. To submit information, log on to www.TheMennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access our online forms. You can also submit information by email, fax or mail:

•Editor@TheMennonite.org

•fax 574-535-6050

•1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794

LeFever, Lloyd K., 91, East Petersburg, Pa., died Feb. 18 of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Miriam E. Blank LeFever. Parents: Isaac H. and Anna H. Kilheffer LeFever. Child: Kenneth L.; one grandchild; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 19 at East Petersburg Mennonite Church.

Lehman, Donald E., 78, Lowville, N.Y., died Feb. 19 of cancer. Spouse: Irene Repak Lehman. Parents: Ezra and Clara Roggie Lehman. Child: Clairon; two grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 22 at First Mennonite Church of New Bremen, Lowville.

Lehman, Elsie Elizabeth, 85, Harrisonburg, Va., died Feb. 5. Parents: Daniel W. and Ada Neff Lehman. Funeral: Feb. 8 at Weavers Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Martin, Richard Warren, 59, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died Feb. 17 of a brain tumor. Parents: Moses and Alice Drudge Martin. Children: Brad, Sabrina Hussey. Funeral: Feb. 25 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

Neumann, Harold R., 75, Goshen, Ind., and Metamora, Ill., died Feb. 12. Spouse: Joanne E. Herbst Neumann. Parents: Emanuel and Martha Springer Neumann. Children: Laurie Nafziger, Lisa Heinz, Mark, Kurt; 10 grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 17 at Metamora Mennonite Church.

Preheim, Harvey W., 94, Freeman, S.D., died Nov. 6, 2008. Spouse: Margaret Graber Preheim. Parents: Jacob and Mary Waltner Preheim. Children: Janis Preheim, Arlo, Roger; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 11 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Richenberger, Mae R., 98, Mount Pleasant, Iowa, died Jan. 25. Parents: Jacob Chris and Druzilla Ann Essley Richenberger. Funeral: Jan. 28 at Kimzey Funeral Home, Mount Pleasant.

Sears, Shirley M. Swartzendruber, 77, Tiskilwa, Ill., and Sarasota, Fla., died Feb. 21 of a massive stroke. Spouse: Wilmer L. Sears. Parents: Herb and Fern Miller Swartzendruber. Funeral: March 5 at Bay Shore Mennonite Church, Sarasota. Memorial service to be held at Willow Springs Mennonite Church, Tiskilwa, in April.

Shenk, Mabel Powell, 94, Harrisonburg, Va., died Feb. 14. Spouse: Amos Shenk (deceased). Parents: Samuel J. and Laura Shenk Powell. Child: Bill. Funeral: Feb. 28 at Strite Auditorium at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, Harrisonburg.

Smoker, Helen Buch, 92, Lititz, Pa., died Feb. 4. Spouse: David Renno Smoker (deceased). Parents: Harvey K. and Anna M. Buckwalter Buch. Children: Jane Davidson, Marie Breneman, Albert, Claude; eight grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Feb. 7 at West Bethany Chapel, Landis Homes, Lititz.

Stoltzfus, Myrtle Phoebe Sutter, 82, Kalona, Iowa, died Feb. 26. Spouse: Sterling Stoltzfus (deceased). Parents: Daniel and Magdalena Roth Sutter. Children: Ruth Boller, Donna Wyse, Jane King, Philip, Barb Garber; 17 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 28 at Yoder Powell Funeral Home, Kalona.

Stutzman, Lela Fern Hershberger, 82, Kinross, Iowa, died Feb. 25. Spouse: Harold Stutzman (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Mabel Hartzler Hershberger. Children: Jerry, James, Stan, John, Donavan, Mary Stutzman; 14 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 28 at Powell Funeral Home, Wellman, Iowa.

Syzdek, Debra "Debbie" Lynn, 50, Philadelphia, Pa., died Feb. 8 of ovarian cancer. Spouse: Joe Syzdek. Children: Jason, Emily Syzdek; one grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 12 at Woodland Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

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Stumptown Mennonite Church, www.stumptown.pa.us.mennonite.net, Bird-in-Hand, Pa., seeks applicants for a ***half-time associate pastor*** for summer of 2009. We envision an associate pastor focusing primarily on youth and young adult ministry with tools of spiritual formation and leadership development. Our associate pastor will be committed to the way of Jesus, with Anabaptist theology and practice, operating in a team setting. Letters of interest and/or resumés can be sent to Ryan Ebersole: Fax: 717-687-6375 or email Pastor Don Sharp: donsharp@hydrosoft.net.

PULSE (Pittsburgh Urban Leadership and Service Experience) seeks ***executive director*** to lead small nonprofit organization in Pittsburgh that cultivates young urban citizens. ED will manage the program, operations and fund-raising. See www.pulsepittsburgh.org for more information. Submit resumé to info@pulsepittsburgh.org by March 27, 2009.

South Hutchinson Mennonite Church (central Kansas) seeks a dynamic, outgoing, Spirit-filled person to join our pastoral team as ***full-time pastor*** to our junior and senior high students. We have an active program for 85 youth; 20 percent of whom come from families that do not attend SHMC. A passion for working with youth who are not yet Christians and a commitment to help youth grow in their relationship with Jesus are essential. Respond to Search Chair, South Hutchinson Mennonite Church, 808 S. Poplar, South Hutchinson, KS 67505. Email judyk@shmcfamily.org or call Keith Leinbach at 620-474-9397.

Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City, Kan., is seeking a ***half-time community services coordinator***, the primary link between the church and the surrounding neighborhood. College degree preferred. Send cover letter and resumé to resume@rainbowmennonite.org. Call 913-236-8820 or visit www.rainbowmennonite.org for a complete job description.

Camp Deerpark is seeking to fill the positions of ***construction assistant and food service assistant***. Salaried positions with benefits, including housing and insurance. Camp Deerpark is a ministry of the NYC Mennonite Churches. Contact Ken Bontrager at 845-754-8669 or admin@campdeerpark.org.

The Mennonite Heritage Cruise and its international resource team invites you to join the ***15th annual cruise in Ukraine on the Dnieper River and Black Sea*** in late September 2009. This has been the ultimate 15-day roots discovery experience for 2,500 descendants of Russian Mennonites and others. For details of the cruise Google "Mennonite Heritage Cruise" or phone Marina Unger, 800-387-1488, ext. 2827.

Executive director/administrator, Assisted Living Facility. Faith-based, not-for-profit organization seeking qualified candidates to provide leadership and direction for a new Ohio, 58-unit assisted living (AL) facility. Located near Columbus, Ohio, the position is responsible for leadership and management in all operational needs, including fiscal, staffing and resident life programs. Requires facility administrator license, bachelor's degree and previous experience in management, resident assessments and resident-care programs specific to the elderly. Candidates should have a demonstrated faith dimension in life. Competitive benefits. Salary depending on qualifications. Apply online at www.greencroft.org or submit resumés to **Greencroft Communities** P.O. Box 819, Goshen, IN 46527.

Director of project development (new position) with a minimum of five years of supervisor/management experience, preferably in retirement services and health-related fields. Prefer experience in development of new programs and project management. Minimum of a bachelor's degree. Send a letter along with a resumé to Steven Ringenberg, Fairlawn Haven Nursing Home, 407 E. Lutz Road, Archbold, OH 43502.

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) invites nominations and/or applications for the position of ***president***, expected to assume office sometime between Jan. 1, 2010, and July 1, 2010. AMBS is a fully accredited post-graduate seminary located in Elkhart, Ind., affiliated with Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. Additional information about the seminary and a complete description of this position can be located at www.ambs.edu.

Qualifications: The ideal candidate for president will

- be an active follower of Jesus, a convinced Anabaptist and an advocate for the missional church in a diverse theological, denominational and faith context;
- have ability and passion for theological education and pastoral formation that includes new models of church, ministry and pedagogy;
- be a creative, entrepreneurial, visionary leader;
- demonstrate theological depth and have earned an advanced degree (Ph.D. or D.Min. strongly preferred);
- understand and be committed to the missions of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA.

Search process: Nominations and/or letters of application with CV or resumé may be submitted to Randall Jacobs, Chair of the Search Committee, c/o AMBSsearch@mennoniteeducation.org or through postal mail to AMBS Presidential Search Committee, c/o Mennonite Education Agency, 63846 County Road 35, Suite 1, Goshen, IN 46528-9621. The search committee will begin reviewing applications in Spring 2009 and continue until the position is filled. Women and minority people are encouraged to apply. AMBS, an affirmative action employer, is committed to Christian beliefs and values as interpreted by the Mennonite church.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email Advertising@TheMennonite.org.

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Be aware of technology's influence

Gordon Houser

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

Mediaculture first appeared in the Feb. 17, 1998, issue of a new magazine called *The Mennonite*. In that column I outlined the purposes of the column and wrote, "We swim in an ocean of media and culture without thinking about it or analyzing how it might affect us."

Shane Hipps, pastor of Trinity Mennonite Church in Phoenix, Ariz., in his new book, *Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith* (Zondervan, 2009, $16.99), has a similar message. He warns about the power of media and our need to be aware of that power: "Our lack of awareness is what empowers the media to bully us."

In this readable and helpful book he tries to increase our awareness of media's power. He draws much on the work of media pioneer Marshall McLuhan, who made the popular observation that "the medium is the message." McLuhan also pointed out that we need not be slaves to media as long as we're willing to pay attention.

"Media and technology have far less power to shape us when they are brought into the light and we understand them," Hipps writes.

Hipps, who worked in advertising before he became a pastor, writes in an engaging style. His short chapters have catchy titles such as "Mr. No-Depth Perception," "Dyslexia and Deception," "A Thousand Feelings" and "The Dimmer Switch."

He presents various technologies with understanding yet cautions readers about their effects. The book is not an academic treatise that deals in complexities, however, and at times it comes across as too simplistic. For example, he repeats the point that the printed word led humanity into left-brained thinking until the image finally released us to be more right-brained.

And while I tend to agree with many of his warnings, I'd like to see younger readers interact with him about the effects of digital social networking, which, he writes, "inoculates people against the desire to be *physically present* with others in real social networks" (his emphasis).

While *Flickering Pixels* can serve as a primer on the effects of technology, Hipps goes on to point out its relationship to our faith and our faith communities. For example, in a chapter that shows how "printing breeds a strong preference for categories," he warns against black-and-white thinking. "Jesus didn't tell us to make *believers*," he writes. "He called us to make *disciples*, and disciples are followers and students of the way of God. Followers learn to change their beliefs as they walk."

Hipps addresses areas that face Christians, members of churches. He discusses how email leads us away from dealing healthily with conflict while Jesus told us to go to our brother or sister.

Hipps also includes insights he has gained as he moved toward the Mennonite church. He mentions lessons he's learned about humility, peace and community (in a chapter called "Y'all").

The book is full of pithy wisdom, perhaps none more concise and inclusive as these three sentences: "Stay awake. Look beneath the surface of things. And learn to bend."

Flickering Pixels would make a good focus for a Sunday school class or small group. It's a book that can help us swim in our mediaculture. TM

FILMS

Revolutionary Road (R) depicts the exhausting breakdown of a marriage in the 1950s. The life of the Wheelers —skillfully acted by Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio—offers a sobering reminder of family life complexities that exist behind closed doors. However, the story works better in the novel by Richard Yates, which more adequately fleshes out the character's motives and desires.—*Anna Groff*

The Wrestler (R) shows the dark side of America's celebrity culture with a frank, often depressing realism. Mickey Rourke plays Randy "The Ram" Robinson, a professional wrestler who is 20 years past his prime. One of the best parts of this film is its peek into the world of professional wrestling. In this world, Randy is a celebrity; outside it, he's a failure. The writing at times borders on cliché, but the acting, particularly Rourke's performance, makes us care about this broken man and yearn for his redemption. —*gh*

BOOKS

In **Pax Avalon: Conflict Revolution** by Steven "Reece" Friesen (Herald Press, 2008, $19.99), the "good guys" and the "bad guys" hold a variety of complex attitudes toward violence—a major strength of this graphic novel. Avalon City's special operations officer, Julianna "Pax" Embry, is a strong superhero struggling with being a Christian, pacifist and officer. Her decisions translate to real life. *Pax Avalon* is stereotypical and preachy at times, but this does not overshadow the well-told message.—*Anna Groff*

Imagination and the Journey of Faith by Sandra M. Levy (Eerdmans, 2008, $18) argues that "we have a built-in longing for Transcendence, … to meet God … beneath and beyond the ordinary of our everyday lives." She explores how imagination is expressed through ritual, music, poetry, art and story, then focuses on practices in the home and in churches. She concludes this timely book by reflecting on the making of meaning.—*gh*

These Are the Footings, edited by Esther Harder (Roaming Pen Press, $9.50), a chapbook of Jonathan Larson's writings from his experiences in Southern Africa, is named for the story about Mma Chabe, "mother of the nation"—an HIV positive widow who opened her homestead to more than 100 orphans and adults in need (see our Jan. 6 issue, page 16). This story and the others demonstrate Larson's admiration for those who face struggles and triumphs. His poetic stories illustrate the people's strength and the beauty of their surroundings. To order, contact roamingpen@gmail.com or 507-822-4333.—*Anna Groff*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Organization: Mennonite Savings and Credit Union is a progressive and visionary organization founded on values of stewardship, compassion, and mutual aid. From our modest beginnings as a 'shoe-box' operation in 1964, we have grown in size to 120 staff members who are dedicated to serving the financial needs of our 16,200 Mennonite, Brethren in Christ and Amish members, with dollars under administration rapidly approaching three quarter of a billion dollars.

The Opportunity: Accountable to, and guided by the Board of Directors, you will provide leadership to MSCU, directing and managing the overall operation to ensure solid financial performance and profitability, and exceptional service delivery to our membership. As MSCU's next Chief Executive Officer, you will articulate our vision of the future for staff and our faith-based community, bringing the credit union's strategic directions to life and moving them forward. Advocating on behalf of our faith-based membership, you will assure an offering of ethical financial products and services that provides opportunity for individual members to transform their stewardship priorities into collective healthy communities. Applying a values-centred leadership approach, the senior leadership team, and management and staff members will be empowered to accomplish the goals of the credit union. You will have a positive influence within the greater Anabaptist community and in the credit union system.

The Candidate: As the ideal candidate you are fully aligned with the values of MSCU and the faith-based membership we serve. As lead strategist, you have a solid track record in planning and management that has resulted in new growth while ensuring financial stability. Your relevant post-secondary education and executive and operational experience within the credit union/financial sector provides a basis for you to rise to the challenge of this exciting opportunity!

Your Next Step: This position has a comprehensive compensation package and relocation support. Our website Mennonite Savings and Credit Union has additional information about this opportunity and considerable information about who we are, the services we provide and the values that govern our credit union. Interested and qualified candidates can direct their inquiries and resumes, in strict and professional confidence by March 31, 2009 to Kaye Rempel, Lead, CEO Search Committee at ksrempel@sympatico.ca or 519-998-1014.

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Everett J. Thomas

An inspirational leader

The economy is in recession. Our denomination is shrinking in size; membership is aging. This is the milieu in which Mennonite Church USA looks for a new executive director—the top staff position in the church. As the process begins, however, the person leading the search is optimistic about our church's future and has already heard one theme from those who describe the leadership we will need during the next years.

"A number of people said at this point we need someone on the inspirational side," said Ed Diller in a phone interview on March 3. Diller, moderator-elect for Mennonite Church USA, is also chair of the search committee.

That is also the first quality the committee listed in a tentative job description (see page 19). It says, "The new executive director will inspire Mennonite Church USA through a compelling articulation of the vision, mission and priorities of the church."

At this point in history, we may need someone with a primary gift for inspiring others.—Ed Diller

Each national church that is part of the global Mennonite family is indigenous to the country in which it is located. The same is true for us. Just as our country has high hopes that a new president will lead us out of this economic depression, we also hope for a leader who will help us grow Mennonite Church USA in ways not yet obvious.

Most of us sitting in the pew on Sunday mornings seldom think about the person leading our denomination through the top staff position. Nevertheless this is a critically important role. It is so important for the future church that we all would do well to pray for the committee in its discernment—the first request they made to us.

There are at least three reasons why this role is critical and why we should all pray for God to lead the committee to the right person:

- **Long-term influence:** Jim Schrag, the current executive director, and Ron Byler, associate executive director, have been involved in denominational leadership for more than a decade. While other leaders, such as the moderator and moderator-elect, are very public for short periods of time, their influence over the trajectory of Mennonite Church USA is relatively minor compared with the influence of long-term staff members.
- **The face of Mennonite Church USA:** In many places, the executive director is the face of our denomination. Whether delivering a letter to Congress or representing us in ecumenical meetings, others draw conclusions about our faith, traditions and values as they interact with the executive director.

But the executive director is also the face of the denomination for us within the church. That is why Schrag's picture and writings regularly appear in *Equipping*, *Beyond Ourselves* and once each month on page 2 of this magazine. Those of us sitting in the pew look at the face of the executive director and see Mennonite Church USA.

- **Things are not working well:** One year ago, the Executive Board said that our denominational system is not working well. At that time, the board said the denomination's vision and call "is not adequately supported by our present relationships, behavior and organization." The new executive director will be charged with moving all parts of our ungainly system toward more synergy—the word currently used for this is "alignment."

The challenge for Diller and the search committee is that the church is both an organization and an organism. There are some leaders in our midst with strong, inspirational pastoral gifts that can lead the church body—the organism—in life-giving ways. There are other leaders with managerial gifts who can leave people and agencies—the organization—inspired to work better together across church structure lines.

"We have both in the job description," Diller said. "Anyone we bring in will have strengths and weaknesses. It may be that at this point in history, we may need someone with a primary gift for inspiring others."

Some of this inspiration comes from the committee itself.

"The search committee is confident that God will lead us to the right person," Diller said, "and that that person will find his or her way to us."

The committee offers many ways for us to give counsel and suggest names. But the best thing we can do is pray that God's leading will be clear to the committee. If so, inspiration will follow.—*ejt*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

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The mystery of resurrection

James Schrag is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

The resurrection of Christ is a mystery to me. I can't explain it. Some people find it difficult to accept mystery. Over the years I have heard sermons and read articles that want to "prove" the resurrection. I have also seen long explanations about how the resurrection could not have happened. I have never been enticed to engage either side of these arguments. To me the resurrection remains a mystery—one upon which the church of Jesus Christ is founded. What does it mean for us to say that our foundations are made of mystery?

John 20 tells this mysterious, miraculous story. Two disciples rush to the tomb at the urging of Mary Magdalene. There they find the linen wrappings without the body. They see and believe, but they do not yet fully understand.

Mary stands weeping outside the tomb. Inside, two angels, one at the head and one at the foot, ask about her sorrow. Through her tears she laments that someone has stolen the body of her Lord. Presently she turns and sees Jesus but does not recognize him until he speaks her name.

At Jesus' command, Mary brings this news to the other disciples. That evening, behind locked doors, Jesus appears to the cowering disciples and offers his peace. Now they also believe, except for Thomas, who is not with them. He demands proof, which he receives a week later.

Somewhere in that story, each of us can recognize ourselves. We make our own connection to the mystery of victory over death through Jesus Christ. Some of us, like Thomas, need proof. Some of us are so prone to lament losses that only the encouragement and instruction of angels can comfort. Some of us meet Jesus but only recognize him slowly or partially. Many of us live in fear behind locked doors of security-seeking habits that isolate us. To all of us, the mystery of resurrection comes in the real presence of the Risen Lord.

The theme and text of our churchwide convention in Columbus this summer comes from this resurrection story (John 20:21-22). "Breathe and be filled" invites us to experience the presence of Jesus in the same room, even to feel his breath as we also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Is our church, founded on such mystery, only the sum of its parts? Are we only the logical result of something that happened in Europe 500 years ago? Are we simply enmeshed with and defined by our culture? Are the discouraging trends we read about ourselves—getting older and smaller—the only stuff of which we are made?

There is something tangible, something we understand all too well, that is required for the mystery of resurrection to occur. Death—and often suffering—is a prerequisite. We can understand life in the babe of Bethlehem, the one who came to bring life and bring it more abundantly. But that same Jesus who suffered, died and was raised on the third day confounds our sensibilities.

Life, death and resurrection speak of the divine plan for each of us. This same combination explains our experiences in many expressions of the church. All these are earthly realities. Maybe they are daily occurrences. But the mystery of them all is resurrection—something we know only through Jesus.

These times are challenging not just because the economy is sour and tottering, not only because there are too many marriages that fail or that there is too great a disparity between the rich and poor. The times are challenging because we assume our lot is made only of life and death. We forget that the mystery of resurrection in Jesus is for us, too.

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

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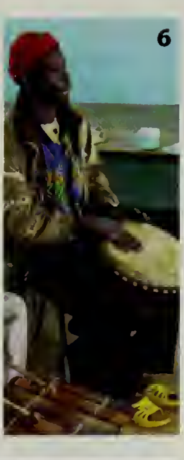

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Cover: Photo taken at Lichtenau Train Station near Tokmak, Ukraine, the site where many Mennonite families were deported to Siberia in 1941. Photographer Evangeline Poggemiller was awarded first place/nature in *The Mennonite*'s 2009 photo contest.

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

The Corinthian Plan

Regarding The Corinthian Plan ("Blessed Insurance," March 3): Yes, we need health care for pastors. But what about the janitor? What about the church secretary? And don't forget the 60-year-old man sitting in the back row who lost his job when his employer went bankrupt, losing his health care and pension. Is it fair that only the pastor is getting consideration? This is a classic example of the health-care mess and the attitudes of many within Mennonite Church USA.

An attempt was made in 1992 to fix the health-care inequality. The efforts were blocked by the opposite party and special interests.

Psalm 82 instructs us on how we are to care for the poor, sick and elderly. When will we begin to practice what we profess?—*Ralph D. Martin, Goshen, Ind.*

I read with great interest The Corinthian Plan articles in the March 3 issue. Having been for many years a member of a congregation of fewer than 60 members and now belonging to a congregation of more than 900 members, I am aware of the diversity in pastoral support. I welcome a plan that expands our "community" across all the church. But I was disappointed that there were no details of how the plan will function. Who gives? Who receives? Hopefully we will be told more soon. —*Carl M. Metzler, Goshen, Ind.*

The March 3 issue contains numerous articles and vignettes that build the case for The Corinthian Plan and the proposal to provide health-care coverage for all our pastors. As stated in the articles, this plan is an outgrowth of a commitment made by Mennonite Church USA at the 2007 San José assembly. While this approach has a lot of positives, a great deal has happened in our country since July 2007. I suspect that within our congregations a much higher number of people now do not have health care as opposed to 2007. We simply cannot only focus on one aspect of this issue.

At the same time, the articles are long on emotions and short on details. How does this approach actually work to lower the overall cost of health care? What are the minimum levels of care that are going to be provided? Does this approach treat mental health diagnoses and addiction diagnosis on par with other diagnoses in the plan?

We have an opportunity to truly present a health-care reform model. I urge our leaders to think outside of the box and make sure we are putting together a plan that can be a model for universal coverage. We will only have one attempt at this.—*Ronald Hunsicker, Lititz, Pa.*

Keith Harder responds

Much has changed since July 2007. In addition to the changing political landscape, even more pastors are without health coverage and more are at risk of losing what they have. The health-care access problem of pastors is admittedly one small part of a much larger problem. But for these pastors and the congregations they serve, it is a big problem. We agree with what Everett Thomas said in the March 3 editorial: "Doing nothing because we cannot do everything is not an option."

Detailed information on the plan is available at www.TheCorinthianPlan.org. We believe this plan will work to lower the overall cost of health-care costs, partly with a strong emphasis on prevention and wellness, but many variables affect cost. The plan will follow the new federal guidelines for mental health parity that were adopted late last year.

The most innovative part of the plan is the way it will spread the cost across the church. It provides an opportunity to practice mutual aid in providing health coverage for our pastors, including those serving in congregations that currently cannot provide this benefit for their pastors. We believe that if we can make this work it could provide a model to provide broader coverage. This is a modest step on a long and difficult journey for our church and our country.—*Keith Harder, project director, Healthcare Access for Pastors and Church Workers*

Editor's note: *See page 21 for more specific details about The Corinthian Plan.*

IN THIS ISSUE

In this Easter issue we offer several portals to the high point in the Christian year. Marlene Kropf (page 8) compares Jesus' burial in the Garden of Gethsemane to a seed planted in the ground and writes, "We must not forget that on Easter Jesus was mistaken for a gardener." The poet Julie Cadwaller-Staub (page 11) echoes this theme with, "To the bulb aching in the ground." For those wishing to wrestle with theological theories surrounding the reasons for Jesus' crucifixion, Darrin W. Snyder Belousek (page 12) examines various traditions and concludes, "The theory that Christ died as an atoning sacrifice for sins as payment of penalty to God … does not accord with the Scriptures." But for Peter Dula, celebrating Easter in Baghdad (page 15), doing theology is not such an easy exercise. "Say that theology means recovering a sense of the world as shot through with grace and beauty—and hoping that world looks like a garden in bloom but fearing it looks like the lawn outside [a bombed-out church]," writes Dula.—*Editor*

Intentional communities

The article on young adults and intentional communities was encouraging ("Mennonite Young Adults Show Renewed Interest in Intentional Communities," March 3). Shane Claiborne and the New Monastic movement (a cross-class solidarity movement that grows primarily out of young adults trying to react creatively to their Evangelical traditions) is taking an interest in what an Anabaptist orientation for intentional communities looks and feels like. Shane recently visited Jubilee MVS House and Fellowship of Hope in Elkhart, Ind., to dialogue.

I wanted to add a few thoughts from my experience in intentional community. I found it a healthy alternative to a nuclear family, a place to explore questions, to give and receive emotional support and to experiment in equalizing income. If there is a service or solidarity component as a part of the intentional living situation, it is a direct way to deepen connections with the surrounding community. The Jubilee MVS House has also gained a lot from listening to the experience of Fellowship of Hope members. If you're in Elkhart on any given Wednesday, you are invited for a community meal at 6 p.m. to continue the conversation.—*Sarah Thompson, Elkhart, Ind./Strasbourg, France*

Payback for Paraguayan Mennonites

The verbal snapshots of Paraguay in the March 17 issue are delightful. Unfortunately, since Edgar Stoesz' article is an adaptation from his book *Like a Mustard Seed: Mennonites in Paraguay*, the article misses a most significant payback in which the Mennonites in Paraguay have been investing intensely: the prison ministry.

For the past nine years, the Protestant chaplaincy of the Tacumbu National Penitentiary, a ministry of the Concordia Mennonite Brethren Church, has offered an alternative to the men incarcerated there. In March 2000, the first ward allowing for holistic rehabilitation of inmates was opened. Currently about 500 men are living in the Christian Rehabilitation Wards. That is more than 15 percent of the total prison population, and the results are stunning: The reentry rate is about 10 percent of the national level. Thousands and thousands of dollars have been invested to convert a human warehouse into a place of safety—initially for those who live there and later for the general population as they are released. As one of the founders of those wards, I bow my head in gratitude to God and to the Mennonites of Paraguay for that significant payback.—*Jonathan Beachy, San Antonio, Texas*

Former Ten Thousand Villages store explains

Regarding "Some Stores in the West Resist Ten Thousand Villages' New Contract" (March 3): The board of directors and managers of CrossRoads MarketPlace, formerly Ten Thousand Villages & Crossroads Thrift in La Junta, Colo., made a sound business decision to move from a contract to a wholesale relationship with Ten Thousand Villages U.S. It was neither a matter of resistance to the new contract nor a lack of commitment to the principles of fair trade and artisans around the world. It was a matter of fiscal responsibility. The decision allows CrossRoads MarketPlace to maintain its longstanding relationship with Ten Thousand Villages with the added flexibility to maintain and expand our fair trade product lines.

In the March 3 article, Craig Schloneger is quoted as saying, "We are pleased that the vast majority of stores have signed the contract, as this helps us strengthen our relationships with artisans around the world."

The commitment to our artisan partners has been above reproach for nearly 23 years, and that commitment remains the cornerstone of CrossRoads MarketPlaces' mission statement: to provide a vital and fair income to artisans in under developed countries by marketing their handi-

continued on page 31

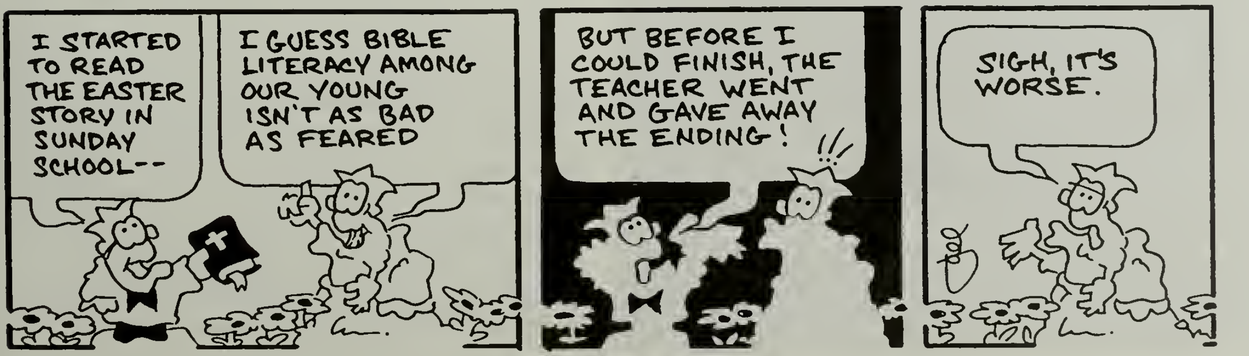
ONLINE POLL RESULTS

In addition to Easter, my congregation has a special service for (82 votes):

- ○ Maundy Thursday (51%)
- ○ Good Friday (16%)
- ○ Both (26%)
- ○ Neither (7%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


I STARTED TO READ THE EASTER STORY IN SUNDAY SCHOOL--
I GUESS BIBLE LITERACY AMONG OUR YOUNG ISN'T AS BAD AS FEARED
BUT BEFORE I COULD FINISH, THE TEACHER WENT AND GAVE AWAY THE ENDING!
SIGH, IT'S WORSE.

IN BRIEF

Kropf director for MCC Great Lakes

Stanley Kropf has been named interim executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes. Kropf has served as assistant director and resource generation development manager for MCC Great Lakes since 2004. He assumed the role of acting executive director when Yvonne Diaz left the position in August 2008. In February the board suspended the search process in light of the current economy and will review the situation in October 2010 and decide whether or not to reopen the search. *—MCC*

MCC East Coast moves to Philly

Mennonite Central Committee East Coast regional office has moved to Philadelphia from Akron, Pa. The new office is in the Oxford Circle area of Philadelphia in a building purchased by Oxford Circle Christian Community Development Association. The building already has several tenants and will eventually house other offices as well as an expanded space for Oxford Circle Mennonite Church.*—MCC*

MWC reps report increased interest of youth

NEWTON, Kan.—Three representatives of Mennonite World Conference reported a growth in involvement of young adults in MWC on March 11 at the Mennonite Church USA offices, Newton .

Bert Lobe from St. Jacobs, Ont., Cynthia Peacock from Calcutta, India, and Tigist Gelagle from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, had been on the road four weeks, speaking to Mennonites about the MWC Assembly this July in Paraguay. Lobe said MWC expects 6,000 participants, including 4,000 from Paraguay, but the economic downturn has made it a challenge for many to come.

Tigist, a young adult, said MWC had planned for 100 at the Global Youth Summit, which will meet during the assembly in Paraguay, but 200 have already signed up, and she expects more.

Lobe said the worship at MWC "is the hope of the church for the North." MWC members in the North, he said, "may say they believe the church is the vehicle for God's reconciliation in the world," but they don't act on that belief. People in the South, however, "particularly the young, the poor and the suffering, do believe this and are showing the way."

Peacock said the effect of having an MWC Assembly in India in 1997 was positive. "People learned they are connected to others around the world. They're not alone."*—Gordon Houser*

Youth train as 'peace servants' for Paraguay

STRASBOURG, France—Eighty-one high school students from Mennonite schools in Paraguay are training to be "peace servants" at Paraguay 2009, the Mennonite World Conference assembly in July. The 27 boys and 54 girls come from eight German-speaking high schools, three Latino high schools and one Indigenous high school from Asunción, the Chaco and eastern Paraguay. The students, ages 16-19, participated in a training camp Feb. 26-28. Peace servants will volunteer with committees for information and guest services, food services, youth and children's activities, service opportunities, the Global Church Village, ushering, tours and security.*—MWC*

Kember Lillo

First known Siamou Christian songs composed

Amidou Jabati (left), Siaka Jabati and Brahima Jabati compose the first Siamou Christian music in a January workshop in Burkina Faso.*—Mennonite Mission Network*

Former Bluffton president Neufeld dies at 83

BLUFFTON, Ohio—Elmer Neufeld, 83, a former president of Bluffton University, died March 30 at Mennonite Memorial Home in Bluffton.

Elmer Neufeld

Neufeld was president of then Bluffton College from 1978 to 1996. Earlier he taught philosophy and served as an academic dean at the college.

He earned a bachelor's degree in 1951 from Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., and a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Chicago.

He worked for the National Service Board for Religious Objectors. He and LaVera, his wife, were active members of Woodlawn Mennonite Church and took a special interest in inter-racial relations.

He worked with the Mennonite Central Committee in Akron, Pa., and later in Leopoldville, Congo, where he served as country director.

Neufeld served as president of the General Conference Mennonite Church and with the Commission on Overseas Mission, Congo Inland Mission/Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, Higher Education Council, National Youth Advocacy Program and Habitat for Humanity.

He is survived by LaVera in Bluffton; children Carolyn and Jerry Huffman, Pandora, Ohio; Cynthia and Roger Neufeld Smith, Topeka, Kan.; Timothy and Kristin Neufeld, Goshen, Ind.; Iris Neufeld and Eric Basinger, Findlay, Ohio; and Francene and Greg Marrin, Columbus, Ohio; six grandchildren and siblings Adolf and Wanda Neufeld, Herb and Lilly Ann Neufeld, Helen and Vern Jantz, and Robert and Rosalie Neufeld.
—Gordon Houser

Israeli court releases arrested CPTers

On March 9, a Jerusalem court released two Christian Peacemaker Teams members whom Israeli police arrested while the CPT workers accompanied 19 Palestinians trying to access their land near the Bedouin village of Um al-Kheir.

The CPT workers were charged with trespass and obstruction of construction work. Israeli

Andréa Ressler

uffton football players fill sandbags for rain forecast

March 9, 50 Bluffton (Ohio) University football players and aches filled sandbags for Bluffton to prepare for a forecast heavy rainfall. The team filled 925 bags with 18 tons of sand community businesses and residents to use. Bluffton ceived heavy rain, but not enough to cause long-lasting oding.—*Bluffton University*

police arrested the CPTers on March 8, when Palestinian landowners from Um al-Kheir asserted their right to visit their land.—*CPT*

Complete Mennonite Encyclopedia now online

GOSHEN, Ind.—On Feb. 20 in Abbotsford, B.C., Richard Thiessen posted the 14,160th and final article from the five-volume Mennonite Encyclopedia onto the Web site of the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia online, www.gameo.org. His final post concluded 12 years of work by volunteers. The new project is to update articles and add new ones by working with regional organizations to generate new biographical and congregational history material about their particular areas. About 1,000 new articles have already been added.—*Mennonite World Conference*

Open letter calls for 'radical hospitality'

GOSHEN, Ind.—Thirty-eight current Mennonite pastors joined 68 other leaders and retired pastors in signing a letter asking congregations to provide "radical hospitality" for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) members. Concerned primarily about pastoral care, the letter does not ask Mennonite Church USA to change its teaching position on homosexuality and avoids any mention of the membership guidelines adopted in 2001.

"We must acknowledge that the church is already divided," the letter says. "We have been willing to sacrifice our LGBT brothers and sisters, their families and friends to preserve a presumed unity."

The letter was drafted by three pastors over the course of a year: Sheri Hostetler, pastor at San Francisco Mennonite Church; Cynthia Lapp, pastor at Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church and Weldon Nisly, a pastor at Seattle Mennonite Church.

The letter is available at www.openlettertomcusa.org.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Indy church breaks ground for church addition

INDIANAPOLIS—First Mennonite Church of Indianapolis broke ground on March 8 for a multimillion-dollar addition to its facility. The 200-plus-person congregation just completed a successful multiyear pledge program that includes the acquisition of a new organ and grand piano.

The reason for such optimistic expansion is the considerable membership growth—a sustained annual growth rate of 2.5 percent for nearly a decade. The current 20-plus-year-old building is too small to accommodate this increase.

David Talbott, co-chair of the construction committee, states that the new addition will provide 8,619 square feet of new space, yielding a 54 percent increase.

Pastor Ryan Ahlgrim says, "This project has given us a golden opportunity to develop a comprehensive plan for all of our property, turning half our extensive lawn into a native wetland area and community gardens that can be enjoyed and used by our neighbors."—*First Mennonite Church*

AARM changes name to Resource Partners

LANCASTER, Pa.—Lancaster-based Association of Anabaptist Risk Management (AARM) has changed its name to Resource Partners: Risk Management Solutions. Resource Partners' mission is to provide risk management products and services that promote human and financial stewardship with Peach Church organizations.

As an umbrella organization, AARM administers multiple insurance and risk management programs, including property and casualty, workers' compensation, health, general and professional liability, and more.

Peace Church Risk Retention Group is a member-based organization that is perhaps the most visible of the six programs served within the Resource Partners family. However, Resource Partners offers a full menu of insurance-related products and services.—*Resource Partners*

—*Compiled by Anna Groff*

IN BRIEF

Sommer interim Maple Lawn CEO

James Sommer is the new interim CEO of Maple Lawn Homes, Eureka, Ill., effective Feb. 1. Before retiring in 2006, Sommer also served on the board of directors from 1998-2004. A graduate of Bluffton (Ohio) College, Sommer was most recently president of Golden Harvest Seeds and was president of Sommer Bros. Seed Company from 1991-1998.—*Maple Lawn*

Vanover is Kidron Bethel Village CEO

Cindy Vanover of The Woodlands, Texas, has been named the new president and chief executive officer of Kidron Bethel Retirement Services Inc., North Newton, Kan. The faith-based, nonprofit company operates Kidron Bethel Village, a continuing-care retirement center. Vanover will assume her duties by May 1 at Kidron. She replaces interim president and CEO LeRoy Weddle.—*MHS Alliance*

The Master Gardener is still at work creating life an

My neighbor is a master gardener and demonstrates her growing skill with more elaborate, more beautiful gardens every year. Before she studied gardening, her backyard was an overgrown, poison ivy-infested hillside sloping down toward the St. Joseph River.

Every season she and her husband toiled on the hillside. One spring they hauled more than 500 huge rocks down the hillside to create borders for flower beds and a small fish pond. Another spring they installed a wooden staircase down the hill for easier access to the perennial garden below. Blue irises, giant purple allium, bright red canna lilies and large-leafed tropical plants dotted the hillside. Along the river's edge flourished lush beds of Sweet William, snapdragons, columbine, lamb's ear and lilies. Now when I arrive home, I often see the two of them sitting beside the pond, content in their garden sanctuary.

Green shoots rising i

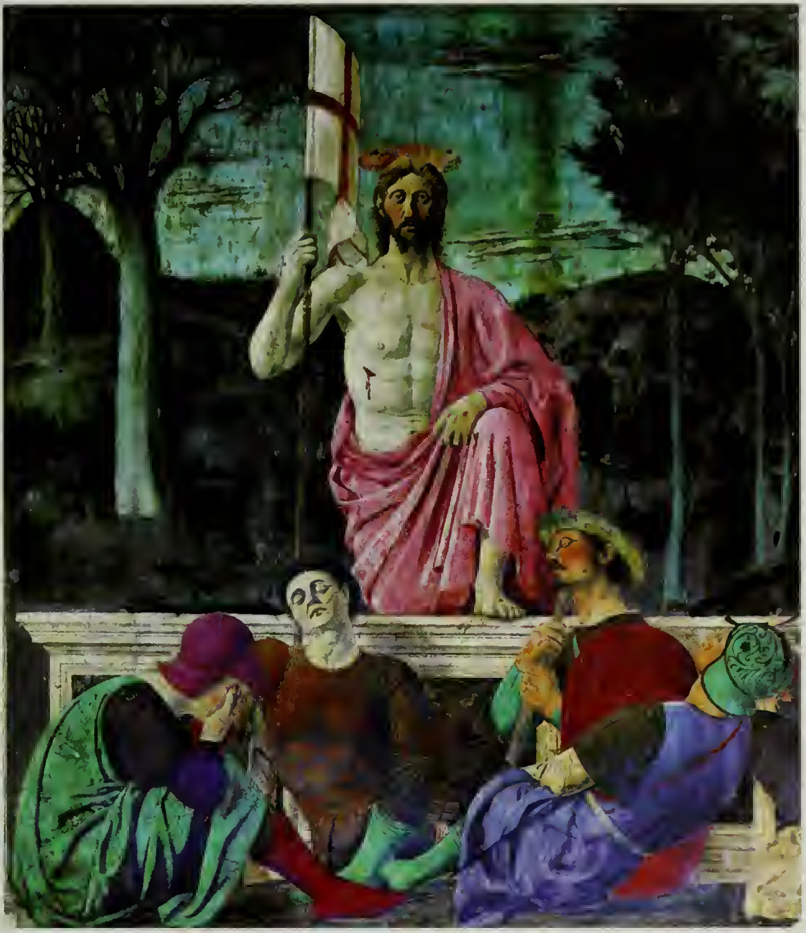
by Marlene Kropf

Like a seed planted in the ground, Jesus came forth—fresh and green, a sign that God's life cannot be stopped by all the forces of evil and death.

eauty in our world.

Though not so skillful or ambitious a gardener as my neighbor, I also enjoy the challenges and rewards of digging in the soil. But it's been a long, cold winter in our region—one of the coldest on record. When I ventured outdoors on one of the first warm days, I searched in vain to find a single green shoot rising in my garden. It's hard to believe any life still lurks beneath the matted frozen leaves and layers of winter debris.

On Easter we remember that Jesus was buried and raised to new life in a garden. Like a seed planted in the ground, Jesus came forth—fresh and green, a sign that God's life cannot be stopped by all the forces of evil and death. In a fourth century catechetical lecture, St. Cyril of Jerusalem expands the metaphor: "Jesus was planted therefore in the earth in order that the curse that came because of Adam might be rooted out. The earth was condemned to thorns and thistles: the true Vine sprang up out of the earth, that the saying might be fulfilled, 'Truth sprang up out of the earth, and righteousness looked down from heaven' (Psalm 85:11)."



"The Resurrection of Christ" by Piero della Francesca

WikiCommons

a resurrection garden

No painting of the resurrection captures the magnificent moment of the new creation better than Piero della Francesca's 15th century fresco "The Resurrection." When I traveled to Italy several years ago, it was this painting—of all the wondrous paintings Italy has to offer—that I most wanted to see (Aldous Huxley once called it "the greatest picture in the world"). A traveler has to be determined to see it, however, because the masterpiece can only be seen by driving many miles along winding roads through Tuscan hill country to the village of Sansepolcro, where the immense painting covers the wall of a room in the town hall. My attention was drawn immediately to the powerful central figure of the resurrected Christ, whose unflinching but stunned eyes seem not to grasp the wonder of what has happened at dawn on the Day of Resurrection. A second look, however, reveals that nature has understood well what just happened. On one side of the painting, the earth is bare and brown; tree limbs are empty of leaves. On the other side, the earth is alive as spring bursts forth in a flurry of freshness on a green hillside under bright blue skies. The whole creation is transformed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We must not forget that on Easter Jesus was mistaken for a gardener. When Mary Magdalene stood weeping outside the empty tomb, she spoke her anguish to one she thought was a worker in the garden, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him" (John 20:13b). But when Jesus' voice penetrated her sorrow, her despair turned to wonder and joy. The first to hear the good news from Jesus himself, she was commissioned to proclaim the amazing message that Jesus was alive.

Early Christians grasped the depth of meaning in the garden scene. Though the First Adam, who was also a gardener, was expelled from Eden because of sin, the Second Adam restored the devastated garden and brought the promise of eternal life to all. In his book *The Fragrance of God*, Vigen Guroian writes, "No wonder at the empty tomb Christ came to Mary Magdalene as the gardener. For he is the Master Gardener, and we, we are his apprentices as well as the subjects of his heavenly husbandry."

After the long, brutal winter we've just experienced, it may be difficult to rejoice or find signs of new life at Easter this year. Beyond the bitter

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After the long, brutal winter we've just experienced, it may be difficult to rejoice or find signs of new life at Easter this year.

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weather we've endured, we've suffered numbing losses across the nation. In Elkhart County, Ind., where I live, nearly one out of five people is unemployed. Many other workers have had their hours cut—some by half—and most have sustained pay cuts. Retired people and those on the verge of retiring have seen much of their financial security wiped out. High school students who expected to go to college now realize that loans may not be available. And those who have always struggled to make ends meet are more desperate than ever. As the economy reels from one blow after another, we wonder if we will ever recover.

Though we would feel more secure in such trying times if our leaders were well-seasoned, we've just elected an enormously likable but untried young politician as President of the United States (whom we hope will work miracles, but no one knows how this story is going to play out).

Neither is the church exempt from grief and loss. As congregational budgets shrink, leaders are facing agonizing choices about staff and programs. Businesses, farms and factories that once provided generous support for mission and relief efforts are now unable to give as much. All our educational institutions have lost significant investment income and face extensive budget cuts.

What sustains my neighbor—and me—is the hope that what is planted will grow, that it will rise again with vigor and beauty.

In Mennonite Church USA we haven't had much good news lately either. Some of the trends revealed in the Conrad Kanagy sociological study described in *Road Signs for the Journey: A Profile of Mennonite Church USA* give cause for grave concern. Will we continue to claim our Anabaptist-Mennonite identity and faithfully, creatively reinterpret it for our time? Will our graying church be up to the challenges of a postmodern world? Will we truly become one body of many races, colors, theological persuasions and economic groups? Will we take the risks of offering our unique gifts to the larger Christian community and to other faith traditions—and also learn from them?

In addition, Mennonite Church USA will soon lose the two dedicated leaders, Jim Schrag and Ron Byler, who guided our church through integration and kept a steady hand at the helm during the tumultuous first years of our new denomination. Without their faith and persistent courage, we would not have found many new and necessary ways to work together in the building of a church oriented toward God's mission. But now we wonder: Will we find energetic new leaders with the wisdom needed for fresh and daunting challenges ahead?

To many it may feel as though Holy Week has gone on forever. And in such a time we might honestly ask whether or how to celebrate Easter. When he saw della Francesca's fresco, poet Robert Corrin Morris reflected on Jesus' descent into hell and the wounds he carried from the grave. In "A Greeting to the Risen One," he observes that subdued celebrations might sometimes be in order:

> "Let the trumpets be at least a little muted
> in recognition that this victory is never won
> without passages too difficult even to speak of
> in the light of day."

When my next-door neighbor faced her weedy, overgrown back yard, she could have succumbed to despair. To me, it looked hopeless. Yet season after season she endured endless hours of backbreaking work and numerous bouts of poison ivy in pursuit of her dream of a backyard paradise—and most of the time with good cheer. Not long ago her garden was a stunning entry in the Master Gardeners' Summer Garden Walk—a feast of color and scent offered to crowds of delighted visitors.

What sustains my neighbor—and me—is the hope that what is planted will grow, that it will rise again with vigor and beauty. We have our work cut out for us as gardeners—clearing winter debris, digging deep, turning the soil, sowing the seed, weeding and watering and waiting. But the time will come, no doubt while we're sleeping, when the life within the seed will burst forth. Some morning soon as I walk in my garden, I'll be astonished to see tiny green shoots appear. The long winter will be over.

What Resurrection Morning proclaims is the good news that, out of destruction and death, the new creation springs forth. The Master Gardener, who planted a garden in Eden and raised Jesus to new life in a garden, is still at work creating life and beauty in our world. If we are not asleep, as the guards were at the garden tomb on the first Easter morning, we may see the bright splendor and fresh hope of green shoots rising in our resurrection garden.

Marlene Kropf is Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership denominational minister of worship.

Let morning come

by Julie Cadwallader-Staub

(after "Let Evening Come" by Jane Kenyon)

Let the owl
be satisfied at last and return
to his snowy bower.

Let the orange rim of the sun
grab hold of the horizon
and hoist itself
into a new day.

Let the eastern faces of the trees
warm up with light.
The chickadee emerge.
The snow throw off its blue cloak.
Let morning come.

To the mice huddled in the nest:
his searchlight eyes are closing,
his killing talons harmless now
clasped around a branch.

To the water caught in ice:
remember your sweet song of motion,
your lithe and liquid body?
Let the melting begin.

To the bulb aching in the ground:
Now, now is the time for rising.
Now, now is the time to flower.

Listen, can you hear it, too?
God is calling.
Let morning come.

Julie Cadwallader-Staub lives in
South Burlington, Vt.

Danny Graber

Once for

Freeing sacrificial atonement from re

by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek

He has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself.—Hebrews 9:26b

The biblical terms for sacrificial atonement, in both Hebrew and Greek, are understood better as cleansing of sin than payment to God. That sentence is sure to elicit responses—positive and negative—because it bears upon a major controversy among scholars and layfolk alike. The question concerns how best to understand the gospel message, not only that "Christ died for us" who were sinners (Romans 5:8) but also that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

> **The Nicene Creed affirms simply that Christ died 'for us humans and for our salvation,' not preferring any one explanation of how that is so.**

Which Scriptures neither Paul nor Jesus says. Paul writes that the righteousness of God disclosed through the death of Christ "is attested by the law and the prophets" (Romans 3:21). And the risen Jesus teaches that his suffering, death, resurrection and glorification fulfill "all the Scriptures," including the law, the prophets and the Psalms (Luke 24:26-27, 44-45).

Early Christians found manifold resources in the Scriptures for understanding Jesus' death. The Apostles, in preaching and prayer, appeal to the Psalms to interpret Jesus' death and resurrection as the victory of God over powers—death and hell, rulers and nations—in rebellion against God's kingdom (Acts 2:14-36, 4:24-30, 13:26-41). The Evangelists of the synoptic tradition cite the Suffering Servant in the prophet Isaiah to interpret the ministry and death of Jesus as obedient service to God that brings healing and peace to a people burdened by sin (Matthew 8:16-17; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:37). And the book of Hebrews employs the sacrificial system in Leviticus to interpret Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice for sins.

Each of these motifs—conflict-victory, vicarious suffering, atoning sacrifice—contributes something essential to our understanding of the cross. And there are several more besides—e.g., redemption, reconciliation, justification. None of these was ever defined as *the* orthodox doctrine for the church catholic by the ecumenical councils. The Nicene Creed affirms simply that Christ died "for us humans and for our salvation," not preferring any one explanation of how that is so.

Still, one motif—atoning sacrifice—has dominated theology of the cross during the second millennium of the church. In both the Medieval mindset of Anselm and the modern mindset of Calvin, Christian understanding of sacrificial atonement conformed to the Greco-Roman paradigm of retributive justice—to right a wrong requires payment (or punishment) equal (or proportional) to the offense. In Calvinist thinking, especially, atoning sacrifice has been explained as payment of penalty to God to satisfy retribution for sin. Thus, the "penal substitution" theory: Jesus died on the cross in our stead to pay the penalty for sin. This theory, with its notion of atoning sacrifice as a divinely legislated penalty/payment, is popular among evangelical Christians, including Mennonites, and is often claimed to be "the biblical view."

Does this theory accord with the Scriptures? Do the sacrifices of atonement described in Leviticus conform to the pattern of retributive justice? We can test this claim against the evidence. If the sacrifices were intended as payment to God to satisfy retribution for sin, then we would expect to find both the sacrifices to be directed toward God and the value of what is sacrificed to be "proportional" to the gravity of the sin. An inductive study of Leviticus finds neither of these to be the case.

all

ibutive justice

Albrecht Durer | WikiCommons

There are two sacrifices for making atonement ("kipper") to consider: "sin offering" ("hattat") and "guilt offering" ("asham"):

Sin offering: Making atonement by sin offering, although done "before the LORD," is not directed toward God but toward sin on behalf of the sinner—God is never the object of the verb "kipper" (Leviticus 4:20b, 26b, 31b, 35b, 5:6b, 10b, 13). And the sacrifice offered varies according to—not the sin but the status and means of—the sinner (Leviticus 4:3, 13-14, 22-23, 27-28, 5:7-13).

Guilt offering: Transgressions require restitution in addition to sacrifice—if I profit by deceit, I must repay the loss (plus a 20 percent penalty), then present a guilt offering. But reparation is rendered to the injured party, not to God, and is distinct from the sacrifice for making atonement "before the LORD." And the offering is a ram ("or its equivalent"), regardless of the transgression (Leviticus 5:14-6:7).

The sacrifices of atonement evidently did not function according to the logic of retribution. The theory that Christ died as an atoning sacrifice for sins as payment of penalty to God, therefore, does not accord with the Scriptures.

Rather than payment of penalty to God, atoning sacrifice was the God-provided means by which God acted to remove sin and guilt and so cleanse pollution from the holy places, things and people of God that are consecrated to God's service (Leviticus 16:15-19, 33; 17:11). Accordingly, we find, the "sin offering" also constitutes the sacrificial ritual of making purification for disease and uncleanness (which are not sins). The sin and purification rituals employ the same Hebrew term for the sacrifice ("hattat") and parallel formulas to pronounce forgiveness or cleansing (Leviticus 12:6-8; 14:18-20; 15:13-15, 29-30). As Old Testament scholars Jacob Milgrom and Perry Yoder have observed, there is really only one sacrificial ritual for dealing with both sin and impurity. And that ritual concerns not payment of penalty but cleansing of pollution.

This view of sacrificial atonement in the Old Testament fits well with the language of sacrificial atonement in the New Testament. Hebrews portrays Jesus as God's high priest, who became human "to make a sacrifice of atonement for the

Correction: Nelson Litwiller's name was misspelled on page 13 of the March 17 issue.

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sins of the people" surpassing all previous sacrifices (Hebrews 2:17; 9:23-10:18). John also writes that Jesus is "the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 2:2; 4:10). The related Greek words "to make atonement" ("hilaskesthai") and "atoning sacrifice" ("hilasmos"), as used in the New Testament, signify the removal or cleansing of sin for purification of God's people. So Hebrews: "he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26b; cf. 1:3; 9:13, 22; 10:2, 4, 11, 14). And John: "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7; cf. 1:9; 3:5). (As to how atoning sacrifice "works," the Bible nowhere says—it is simply God's doing.)

> **Sacrificial atonement is the means by which God acts graciously, whether through priests (now obsolete) or through Christ ("once for all").**

All this helps us resolve the "conundrum of forgiveness" (Martin Birkey, *The Mennonite*, Aug. 5, 2008). Birkey points out a crucial problem: how to square Jesus, on the one hand, who offers forgiveness with authority but without condition (Matthew 18:21-35, Mark 2:3-12, Luke 7:36-50, John 8:2-11), and popular theology, on the other hand, which explains Christ's death as a substitutionary punishment legislated by God to satisfy retribution. If God forgives sinners only on the precondition that Christ has paid the penalty for sin by the atoning sacrifice of his death, then can it really be called forgiveness, which signifies remission rather than payment?

Birkey's conundrum, however, is premised on a false assumption. For it assumes, mistakenly, that to say that Jesus' death was an atoning sacrifice for sin is to say that it was a payment of penalty to God—which assumes that sacrifice of atonement functioned according to the logic of retribution. As we have seen, this was not the case. In sacrificial atonement, forgiveness is the correlate not of payment of penalty but of cleansing of sin. Making atonement was not a transaction between God and humans in the coinage of sacrifice, whereby God rendered forgiveness in exchange for humans rendering sacrifice. Rather, forgiveness signified the reality of God's gracious action "for us" by means of sacrifice to remove sin and right sinners.

Birkey's conundrum would leave us with a dilemma—either deny that God's forgiveness in Jesus is truly a gift or dismiss sacrificial atonement from our theology of forgiveness. I agree with Birkey that the latter is not an option. Once we recognize the false premise of the conundrum, however, we realize that this is an unnecessary choice: sacrificial atonement and divine grace are not at odds; rather, sacrificial atonement is the means by which God acts graciously, whether through priests (now obsolete) or through Christ ("once for all").

At odds are the divine grace of forgiveness and the Greco-Roman logic of retribution, upon which is based the penal substitution theory of atonement. The "conundrum of forgiveness" results from inappropriately explaining divine grace in terms of retributive justice—grace means that God forgives us because Jesus pays our penalty for sin. What we need, then, is a properly biblical understanding of sacrificial atonement. And what we need to reject is the thinking that insists on force-fitting sacrificial atonement, God's forgiveness and Christ's cross into the straitjacket of retributive justice.

Indeed, that God is no prisoner to the logic of retribution is precisely the good news Paul proclaims (Romans 3:21-26). The justice of God is disclosed through the faithfulness of Jesus, not by satisfaction of retribution but "apart from law." We are thus justified—forgiven and righted—through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, not by payment of penalty but "by [God's] grace as a gift." Thanks be to God.

Darrin W. Snyder Belousek serves with Mennonite Mission Network as co-leader (with wife Paula) of the Service Adventure unit supported by Raleigh Mennonite Church. This article draws from a book he is writing on atonement theology.

Correction: The Deaf School in Filadelphia, Paraguay (March 17, page 14), is not a Mennonite Central Committee partner. Please send donations to the school and not to MCC.

Easter in Baghdad

Worship is a political act.

by Peter Dula

I was in Baghdad during Holy Week of 2004, the week the stupidity of the Iraq war became unavoidably obvious. On Palm Sunday, the day the people of Jerusalem took to the streets to welcome a messiah they did not comprehend any more than we do, thousands of Moqtada al-Sadr's followers shut down central Baghdad's streets, protesting the arrest of a top aide and the closing of al-Sadr's newspaper.

Later that week—the week when we celebrate Christ's triumph over death and forgiveness over vengeance—the American military unleashed an assault on Fallujah in which 518 Iraqis were killed, including 237 women and children. In an Easter Sunday letter to the Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship I wrote: "Jesus has indeed risen, even if it was a hell of a long time ago and even if there is no evidence of it in Baghdad." At a church the night before, I had listened to a priest preach on a story from St. Ephraim, then announce the times for the next day's Mass, adding an ominous caution: "Please go directly home. Do not linger and do not walk home in large groups."

Please go directly home. Do not linger and do not walk home in large groups.—a priest in Baghdad

What is theology? What is it for? What does it do? I try to teach the kids in my ethics class at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., that worship is political—in other words, that going to Mass in Baghdad in Holy Week was a political act. The idea—familiar from such theologians as the late John H. Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas—is that the church doesn't have to go outside itself for a political ethic. It doesn't have to pack up some theological insights or implications and then carry them over to another, alien realm called the political to "apply"

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them. Worship simply is a politics—an alternative politics, to be sure, but a politics.

To help students understand this, I remind them that in many countries it is illegal to gather on a Sunday morning. I also tell them how Basil of Caesarea used to deny Communion to soldiers for a year after they returned from battle; I suggest that perhaps we should do that in our churches. I ask them what they think would happen if some gutsy Methodist bishop threatened to excommunicate a president who declares war, the way New York Cardinal John O'Connor threatened Catholic politicians who support abortion rights. Or I evoke for them Archbishop Oscar Romero, walking into the church the army had turned into a barracks, kneeling before the cross, collecting the hosts while bullets shattered the cross above him.

Mariology may be a strange topic for a Mennonite theologian, but I am taking you where the sisters took me.

The students aren't easily convinced, which may only reflect their teacher's own uncertainties. Later, in the summer of 2004, Hauerwas sent me a lecture he had written in which he took the worship-is-politics argument and ratcheted it up a notch by arguing that worship is the church's alternative to war. The sacrifice of the Son of God replaces and overcomes the sacrifices George W. Bush invoked when he urged that the United States "stay the course" in Iraq so that thousands of American soldiers will not have died in vain. The Eucharist, Hauerwas went on, is "the witness necessary for the world to know there is an alternative to the sacrifices of war."

It is an argument Hauerwas has honed for decades, one he has taught several generations of students at Notre Dame and Duke to follow. But I had been living in Baghdad for six or seven months at that time and I wrote him back a nasty letter. I called the argument "anemic" and wrote, "You seriously want me to tell these people, 'Yes, but have you tried worship?' "

A few weeks after I received the lecture, the U.S. Army engaged Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army in a major battle in Najaf, one of the two holiest cities in Shiite Islam. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani was away from his Najaf home for heart surgery in London. He returned three weeks into the battle—and within days brought an end to it. He called on the Shiite faithful to come to Najaf, to the Shrine of Imam Ali, murdered son-in-law of the Prophet. Tens of thousands came. The BBC, which for weeks had been running some of the best footage of the war from just outside the shrine, now broadcast pictures of the tear-streaked faces of weaponless Iraqi soldiers from both sides of the conflict kissing the bullet-ridden walls of the mosque. I sent a sheepish and apologetic email to Hauerwas: "Ah, so this is what you meant."

What is theology? What difference is there between saying that humans are by nature political animals and saying they are worshiping animals? Aristotle understood politics to be the most important branch of philosophy because it is the work of creating the conditions in which humans could fulfill their nature. Augustine and Aquinas considered theology the queen of the sciences because it was in the polis called church that we could find the conditions to fulfill our nature—that is, to become Christlike.

A year after Hauerwas sent me his lecture, I found myself in a city in northern Iraq. I went to spend three days in mid-August at a convent with a dozen Catholic nuns who had become friends. They ran a women's shelter that I had wanted to visit and they asked me to come that week to celebrate with them their most important feast—the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, the day that Mary, Mother of God, was taken bodily into heaven.

What is theology? Surely if it is anything, it is this: "I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary." Mariology may be a strange topic for a Mennonite theologian, but I am taking you where the sisters took me. Mary represents discipleship here. As Rowan Williams points out, she should not be read alone but alongside the only other person mentioned in the creed aside from Jesus, Pilate—"the one who said yes, and the one who said no." The creed offers this teenage girl from Nazareth as the alternative to empire.

The feast day, Aug. 15, was also the day of the referendum on the new Iraqi constitution. Such days were often the occasion of violence, good days to stay out of regions like the one where the nuns lived. But as a theology student, I couldn't resist the opportunity for a literal enactment of

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window

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Panaroma

Sermons bring message from the Holy Spirit

As June Alliman Yoder, professor of communication and preaching, retires from 27 years of teaching at AMBS, are there still things she is learning as she listens to students' sermons?

"Oh yes," she says. "Oh, yes. Yes!"

"I have been ministered to," June says. "I can't believe I was so honored to have this job."

Early in her tenure at AMBS, she team-taught with Erland Waltner, now president emeritus. Erland taught students how to prepare sermon content; June taught them how to shape it and communicate it

In the late 1980s, when the curriculum for the Master of Divinity was revised, June helped to design the course Foundations of Worship and Preaching. This also was team-taught. June and Marlene Kropf worked together on the worship and preaching aspects; Mary Oyer and later Rebecca Slough taught the music components.

June believes the way to learn how to preach is to give a sermon, get constructive feedback; preach again and get feedback; preach again and get feedback. So she took her role very seriously, often providing students with several pages of response for each sermon. Her goal was to give the kind of feedback that would be an honest critique of the sermon and also would encourage and support the student.

Over 27 years, June also led workshops and the Preaching Institute for pastors across the United States and Canada. She says she has taught a generation of pastors, probably somewhere between 700 and 1,000.

Over the 27 years of her teaching, June says, "what the Holy Spirit says and how we communicate that has changed, but the team-work of the preacher and the Holy Spirit has not changed.

"If the preacher is going to say something, the preacher must first listen—listen to the Holy Spirit, listen to the text, listen to the congregation." June's dissertation was centered on this topic and it has been at the core of her teaching all through her work at AMBS and in the church.

What that means for listeners in the congregation is this: "If God has spoken to the preacher and the preacher is interpreting that word to us, then I better listen. We'd better be on the edge of the pews!" June believes.

That may just be why, after hearing thousands of sermons, June is still learning. ●

Mary E. Klassen

June Alliman Yoder receives a gift of a ceramic cross, created by Goshen potter Dick Lehman, as a gift at the event honoring her as she retired from teaching at AMBS.

AMBS: A place of learning for all

The average age of AMBS students is 40 years. However, behind that statistic is the fact that one-fourth of the student body is between the ages of 21 and 24. More students are here immediately after graduating from college than at any other time in the last 20 years.

On the other hand, some students have come to AMBS as 50- and 60-year olds, either for first-time study or to complete a degree. In addition, the programs of the Church Leadership Center bring both new and experienced pastors and high school youth to AMBS—pastors for ongoing learning and reflection; youth for ministry exploration.

This mix of teenagers, young adults and people from different ministries and professions gives richness and integrity to the worship and learning at AMBS. In this issue of *AMBS Window*, read about several people who have chosen to come to AMBS at different stages of life and give thanks to God that AMBS is a place for all ages. ●

Vada Snider

I was a history and religion major at Goshen College and felt a calling to some sort of teaching. I came to AMBS because I want to be challenged to grow spiritually as well as academically and to go into teaching as a ministry.

Here the study of history, ethics and theology is not separated from the faith journey. There's attention to integrating what we are studying with faith development.

The most surprising thing about my experience so far is that even though I am not living on campus, I am enjoying the community of people here. I am overwhelmed by the sense of camaraderie. We learn together, and I feel nourished and supported by other students in surprising ways.

Jonny Gerig Meyer, first-year student in the Master of Divinity program from Goshen, Ind.

……

My spiritual life came alive at Highland Community Church in Abbotsford, B.C. I attended there for seven years and began to feel a sense of religious vocation. Coming to AMBS seemed the logical next step, and I am in the Master of Arts in Christian Formation program. I am not certain yet where my place will be in the church, but I do know that I want other people to have experiences in the church like I have had. I want to be a conduit of God's grace.

Coming here meant taking a risk—leaving a job, my community and everything familiar. But I sense that I made the right decision in coming to AMBS and am comfortable with the uncertainty about what will come next.

Christine Kampen, first-year student from Abbotsford, B.C.

Mary E. Klassen

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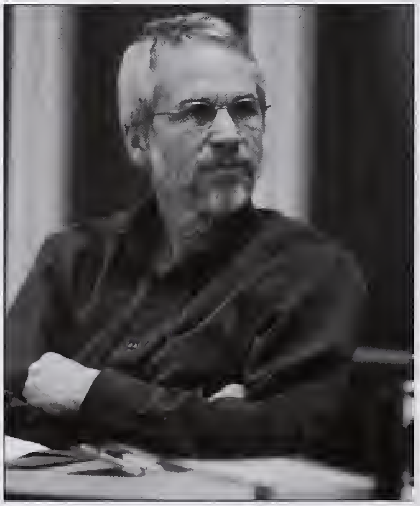

Tyler Klassen

I studied at AMBS for a year from 1979 to 1980. Since then I spent twelve and a half years working in the Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes office when it was in Kidron, Ohio, and did four terms of service in Latin America.

I'm here now to continue my studies in the Master of Divinity program. As I look to the future, I see a fork in the road—pastoral ministry or further service in Latin America—and I'm not sure which path will open up. I'm taking Foundations of Worship and Preaching, Economic Justice and Christian Conscience, Pastoral Ministry and Leadership, and Mission and Peace: The Church's Ministry in the World. Regardless of which way I go, these classes will be helpful. This transition is an inspiring and invigorating time.

Charles Geiser and Teresa Geiser, his wife, came to AMBS from Colombia. Prior to that they lived in Apple Creek, Ohio.

Mary E. Klassen

I wanted to participate in Pastors Week in January because I had not been to AMBS since I graduated. I wanted to see faculty, friends and fellow pastors from across the U.S. and Canada. Dr. Diana Butler Bass's presentations and several workshops drew my interests, too.

I participated in Alan Kreider's workshop, "Witnessing during the worship service." It was helpful to learn ways to practice Christian witness during the worship service..

Bock Ki Kim, Master of Divinity, 2002; pastor of Vision Mennonite Church, London, Ont.

* * *

George R. Brunk to serve as interim president

George R. Brunk, III, will serve as interim president for AMBS, beginning July 19. He will serve until a new president begins, a tenure of six to twelve months.

Dr. Brunk has taught and served as vice president and academic dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., since 1974. He also has served in numerous leadership positions in the Mennonite Church. He holds a Doctor of Theology degree from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia and was ordained to Christian ministry in 1964.

Dr. George Brunk, III, named interim president for AMBS, greets Professor Emeritus Willard M. Swartley.

"The board is pleased to have George Brunk join the administrative team at AMBS," Ray Friesen, chair of the AMBS board, said. "We believe this early announcement and the unique gifts George has will bring a sense of stability for the seminary community, donors and constituency through this time of transition while we also manage the effects of the economic downturn. We ask the church to pray for the seminary and its leadership team during this time."

J. Nelson Kraybill, president of AMBS since 1997, will end his assignment at AMBS in July and will pursue other ministry opportunities.

A search committee is seeking a new long-term president for AMBS. To see a list of members and to offer nominations, visit www.ambs.edu/news-and-publications/search. ●

Your gifts at work

Because the generosity of friends across Canada and the U.S. is essential in our mission, we will report here several ways in which gifts to AMBS have been used in recent months.

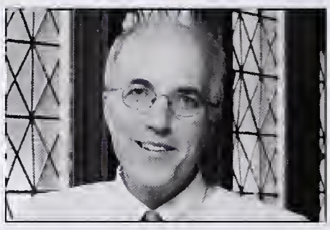
1 A January class in Guatemala learned about peace and justice issues from a Latin American perspective. Professor Ted Koontz accompanied the group.
2 Pastors Week, January 26–29, featured Diana Butler Bass, who shared how mainline churches are finding renewal in their core practices and traditions.
3 Students and mentors in Journey: A Conference-based Leadership Development Program, reflected on what they have been called to do in a weekend learning event, Feb. 27–March 1.
4 One of the student apartments has been refurbished with hardwood floors and new kitchen and bathroom fixtures. This is a prototype for additional apartment renovations. ●

Mary E. Klassen

President's Window

The call of God comes at every stage of our lives. The boy Samuel did not sleep another wink on the night the Lord "came and stood there, calling 'Samuel! Samuel!" Moses at midlife was daunted to hear God say in the desert, "I will send you to Pharaoh." Life changed forever for international business woman Priscilla when God called her to be a teacher in the early church.

It is a wonderful sign for the Mennonite Church that more congregations are helping people at every stage of life hear and answer God's call. It is urgent that this call include preparation for pastoral leadership and mission work. AMBS is one place where people at various stages of life receive spiritual and intellectual formation for leadership in the church and witness in the world.



In recent years the AMBS !Explore program has helped scores of Mennonite teenagers test their own calling. Graduate programs at AMBS are seeing a surge of recent college graduates (who bring energy and probing questions) as well as older students up to typical retirement age (who bring wisdom and life experience). Current AMBS students include a former newspaper editor, people from various business backgrounds and former school teachers or nurses.

All these age groups working together makes for a rich learning environment. At a time when jobs in the wider society are scarce, more people from all stages of life are coming to seminary. This is a gift for the church, because it suggests that God is preparing leaders for the years ahead.

This is also a challenge for AMBS, because economic turmoil in the wider society has diminished our financial resources. AMBS employees recently pledged to give an additional $110,000 back to the seminary next fiscal year to help balance the budget. That is how strongly we feel that, at a time when enrollment is increasing and the church needs leaders, the seminary must remain vibrant. We thank God for each of you who share in this gratifying work with your dollars, prayers, and moral support.

— J. Nelson Kraybill

Alumni News

Joel Miller (Master of Divinity 2006) was ordained on Feb. 1 at Cincinnati (Ohio) Mennonite Fellowship.

David Elkins (Master of Divinity 2005) was ordained September 7 at Lima (Ohio) Mennonite Church.

Rachel Nafziger Hartzler (Master of Arts in Christian Formation 2004) was ordained November 23 at Pleasant Oaks Mennonite Church, Middlebury, Ind.

Paula Killough (Master of Divinity 2008) is senior executive for advancement for Mennonite Mission Network.

Daniel S. Schipani (Faculty) and **Leah Dawn Bueckert** (Master of Divinity 2006) have edited *Interfaith Spiritual Care: Understandings and Practices* (Pandora 2009).

Panorama

Pastors on sabbatical at AMBS

This semester AMBS is hosting several pastors on sabbatical through the AMBS Engaging Pastors sabbatical program. Steve Goering, pastors of Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church, was on campus for two months, accompanied by Susan Ortman Goering, his wife, who also is a pastor of Columbus Mennonite Church.

Mary E. Klassen

Horace McMillon, pastor of Open Door Mennonite Church, talks with John Rempel, AMBS professor, during the first segment of his sabbatical last fall.

In April. Horace McMillon (pictured at right), pastor of Open Door Mennonite Church, Jackson, Miss., will return for a second segment of his sabbatical. Also planning to come in April are Angela Ozuruonye Nze of Christ Life Chapel, Avondale, Ariz., and Samuel Olarewaju of Berean Fellowship Church, Youngstown, Ohio.

On April 30, AMBS will host a conversation with these sabbatical pastors and regional pastors about ministry in diverse settings.

Spring 2009
Volume 19 Issue 2

The purpose of *AMBS Window* is to invite readers to call people to leadership ministries, and to provide ways for readers to become involved with AMBS through financial support, prayer support and student recruiting.

Editor: Mary E. Klassen
Designer: Nekeisha Alexis-Baker

Distributed three times a year as a supplement to *Canadian Mennonite* and *The Mennonite*.

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worship as politics. I wanted to watch the nuns choose to celebrate the assumption of the Blessed Virgin instead of voting. These were women whose explicitly stated mission is to the poor—women who take the poor into their home, feed them, tend them when sick and invite them into their chapel three times a day to pray together. In the van on the ride to the church, we passed dozens of posters promoting the political referendum. I asked three of the nuns what they thought would happen with the new constitution. "The what?" Sr. Basma asked. When she realized what I was referring to, she just laughed. Sr. Noor said, "Politics. Lies. Ya haraam."

After Mass, the sisters scattered to the homes of relatives or friends in the village. I went with Sr. Maria, Sr. Hanaa and Sr. Maysan to Maria's sister's home for an enormous breakfast of bread, meat and kube. Kube is a traditional Iraqi dish of balls of meat breaded in rice flour and boiled in tomato sauce. For the Feast of the Assumption every home makes hundreds of them. Each house has a 10-gallon steel pot set over a fire, making enough kube to feed dozens. They keep some at the house for the many guests who will come in the course of the day. And they carry some to the church in tin buckets. All day the poor of the village, Christian and Muslim, come to the church to eat.

I could call this Eucharist, though they might consider that a willful Protestant misreading. But how about this? On the afternoon of another Sunday during the summer of 2004, I'd been in my hotel room writing a letter to a friend when I heard an explosion, then another and another. I felt the building shake and quiver. Outside the sky turned charcoal gray. The next morning I discovered that several churches had been hit, including Peter and Paul Chaldean, the church in front of Babel College, where I was teaching. I had an appointment with the dean that morning at 11 and went over early. Ten people had died, victims of two car bombs, one of which had exploded in the churchyard as people were leaving the Mass. Now parts of cars were strewn across the lawn, burned completely black. I encountered one of my students. He was looking for his aunt, who'd been at the church the day before. No one had heard from her.

Shall we call that Eucharist—a grotesque Eucharist from some Chaldean Cormac McCarthy? These are our bodies, broken for nothing. This is our blood, shed for God-knows-what. Sr. Maria talked about that day. She had been at a nearby church and hurried over to offer any aid she could. She told me that all her life she had fainted at the sight of blood, but on that day she diligently picked through the remains of ash and car parts to match up scattered human limbs for proper burial. I found myself remembering the big table facing the congregation at the old Blossom Hill Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., engraved with the words "Do this in remembrance of me." Years later I learned to understand Eucharist as a re-membering, as stitching together the various parts of the body of Christ into one.

Theology means wondering if the church is a 2,000-year-old dance before the empty tomb or a 2,000-year-old funeral at the foot of the Cross.

Why is it a theological failure, if it is, to say that "Jesus is risen, even though it was a long time ago and there is no evidence of it in Baghdad"? What is theology? Say that theology means negotiating the edges between celebrating the already and mourning the not-yet and confessing that we rarely know which is which—and still less whether to mourn or to celebrate that ignorance. Say that theology means wondering if the church is a 2,000-year-old dance before the empty tomb or a 2,000-year-old funeral at the foot of the Cross. Say that doing theology means recovering a sense of the world as shot through with grace and beauty—and hoping that world looks like a garden in bloom but fearing it looks like the lawn outside Peter and Paul Chaldean Catholic Church. Say, finally, that discipleship means inhabiting such contradictions, that theology itself dwells in them, often silently.

This article has been adapted from the longer, original version: "Easter in Baghdad," by Peter Dula (March 28, 2008), © 2008 Commonweal Foundation, reprinted with permission (www.commonwealmagazine.org). It also appeared in Cynicism and Hope, *edited by Meg Cox (Cascade, 2009).*

MLK and the struggle for a better world

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.
—Martin Luther King Jr.

Harold A. Penner is a member of Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

Those were the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. in his famous April 4, 1967, speech. That speech articulated the immorality of the Vietnam War. King was being faithful to his commitment to the nonviolence teachings and life of Jesus of Nazareth by speaking out against injustice wherever he saw it.

How we spend our money is how we vote on what exists in the world. The hundreds of billions of tax dollars wasted annually for war and war preparation is money unavailable for programs of social uplift, especially hunger relief, poverty reduction, affordable housing, education, medical care or meaningful, life-sustaining jobs. King knew that the violence of militarism, the violence of racism and the violence of orchestrated poverty have the same sources: fear of "the other" and the willingness of the powerful elite to violently protect their own wealth and power. King was opposing an entrenched pro-war system with the capability for unleashing enormous violence against any and all perceived enemies, foreign and domestic.

In Iraq the United States has been spending 1 million taxpayer dollars every four minutes. Since 2001, Congress has appropriated $859 billion for Afghanistan, Iraq and other military operations. Tremendous fortunes are made in every war, so war is popular with the military-industrial investors, the elite, right-wing Christians, the Pentagon, the CIA, politicians, the defense industries and the people who need the work. Obscene expenditures are made for weapons research and development. Weapons manufacturers thrive and become more entrenched every year.

Martin Luther King's antiwar stance challenged the self-interests of those in the military-industrial complex. King was correct in his prophecy that America was losing its soul. Both the affluent and the poor have succumbed to the addictions of exploitive, corrupt capitalism—an economic system that has run so far amok that it seems about to crash. Greed blows out the spark of the divine in all who succumb to it, and the loss of compassion in winners and losers worsens the plight of the suffering billions of victims whose resources have been taken from them.

Violence is epidemic, especially poverty and racism. Gun violence is also epidemic. Those making profits in the weapons industry have sabotaged even the most modest handgun and assault rifle controls—all while flooding America and the world with increasingly lethal weapons.

Ending a war isn't the same as bringing peace. America has been on a war footing since Pearl Harbor, 67 years ago. The United States spends more on its military than the next 16 countries combined. If the U.S. government has a vision of change that goes to the heart of this country's problems, ending our dependence on war is far more important than ending our dependence on foreign oil. Let's abolish war like our forebears abolished slavery.

Our vision of change must be backed with economic realities that reflect our commitment to peace. The following things can be done now:

- Fund social services and take the balance out of the defense and homeland security budgets.
- Require military personnel to devote time to rebuilding infrastructure.
- Write into every defense contract a requirement for a peacetime project.
- Subsidize conversion of military companies to peaceful uses with tax incentives and funding.
- Phase out military bases (761 on foreign soil and 4,668 in the United States and convert them to housing for the poor.
- End future weapons technologies.
- Make arms dealing illegal.

At the conclusion of his speech, King said: "War is not the answer. We still have a choice today; nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation. We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to work for peace and justice throughout the world that borders on our doors. If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality and strength without sight." TM

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Wrestling at Peniel**—Anna Maria Johnson
- **At once**—Gordon Houser

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of *The Mennonite*, the board for The Mennonite, Inc., or Mennonite Church USA.

MC Canada fiscal year ends with deficit

Lancaster Conference reduces FTE; IN-MI Conference closes office on Fridays.

The General Board of Mennonite Church Canada will seek delegate approval of a balanced budget June 5-7 at the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly in Saskatoon.

The board approved the budget for the fiscal year ending in 2010 during meetings in Winnipeg March 6-7. The board decision came after vigorous discussion and review of the financial year just past, in which finances fell approximately $139,000 short (unaudited figures) for the year ending Jan. 31. The deficit will be covered by a transfer from reserves. Gordon Peters, chair of the Financial Policy and Audit Committee, expressed gratitude: Congregations gave generously, slightly exceeding giving projections.

However, late in the last quarter of the year it became evident that income/losses from investments and decreased designated giving due to increasing global economic pressure would result in a shortfall.

The General Board approved a budget that includes a spending deferral of $150,000. Finances will be closely monitored to determine the possibility of reconsidering these deferrals during the budget year.

The deferred expenses consist of delayed hiring for some currently vacant positions and deferring some planned and needed spending, such as an upgrade of aging office computers and building maintenance at Shaftesbury offices.

Phone conferences will replace some face-to-face leadership meetings. The board affirmed a 3.4 percent cost of living allowance for staff salaries according to existing policy.

After a transfer from reserves to cover the current deficit, there will be $200,000 remaining in the primary reserve fund and $100,000 in the capital reserve fund—an uncomfortably low reserve level, says Randy Wiebe, director of finance.

"Our goal is to have a minimum of three months worth of operating funds in reserves, in the event of a crisis," he says.

The church will be there long after particular banks, favored stocks and even powerful empires have failed.—Robert J. Suderman

Robert J. Suderman, general secretary, observes that the current financial climate provides a timely opportunity to evaluate investment priorities.

"Strengthening the church is a good investment anytime, including times of crisis," he says. "As we speak, people throughout the world are turning to the church to help carry them through the impact of failed financial systems. The church will be there long after particular banks, favored stocks and even powerful empires have failed."—*Dan Dyck of Mennonite Church Canada*

Lancaster Conference reduces staff hours

When Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference reduced staff hours, almost all staff members experienced some kind of cut in hours or pay or both. But the biggest effect may be a renewed dependence on God to provide resources for the church.

"I have advocated to keep staffing levels higher because we were handling so much systemic change in the conference," says Keith Weaver, conference moderator.

"But a combination of things—including the economic downturn as well as the trend of congregations spending more locally—requires us to pull back somewhat," Weaver says.

While some positions stayed the same, over half the full-time staff had their hours cut by 10 to 25 percent. One position (the receptionist position) was cut fully. Options for covering the front desk are still being considered.

"I want to publicly thank the conference staff for their courage and flexibility in facing these changes," Weaver says. "I also want to thank Paul Garber for the years he served as conference receptionist."

"Even as this situation causes pain, it also helps us rethink our understanding of how God resources the church," he says.—*Lancaster Mennonite Conference*

Indiana-Michigan Conference closed on Fridays

Beginning April 1, the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference office will be closed on Fridays for a three-month trial period. The idea arose out of discussions about cutting staff hours in response to financial challenges, says Heidi King, administrative coordinator.

In the meantime, it has been decided that staff hours will not be cut during this fiscal year.

"Some benefits to the experimental schedule," says King, "are that it will increase opportunities for communication among staff team members because their schedules will overlap more from Mondays to Thursdays and that it will reduce utility expenses and other operating costs."

"We gave serious consideration to which day of the week we should close," she says, "recognizing that any option would have its ups and downs—thus the emphasis on this being a trial period."—*Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference*

New leaders for denominational ministry

Lee Lever, Nancy Kauffmann begin assignments with Mennonite Church USA.

Lee Lever

Nancy Kauffmann

Lee Lever has begun a new assignment as interim director of denominational ministry for Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership. He will lead a team of denominational ministers providing support and encouragement for conference ministers.

In his new role, Lever will work collaboratively with area conferences and churchwide agencies to equip conference ministers for their work with congregations.

Lever and denominational ministry staff also oversee the pastoral call system, pastoral salary guidelines, resource packets for conference ministers and more.

"Mennonite Church USA is on a journey of responding to God's call for us to be a people of healing and hope," says Lever, "and we want to help area conferences as they provide connections and build relationships among pastors and congregations."

Nancy Kauffmann will join Lever as a denominational minister for Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership, effective May 1. She joins Linford King, Phil Bergey and Iris de León-Hartshorn as denominational ministers responsible for building strong, churchwide relationships with Mennonite Church USA area conferences and their staff.

> We want to help area conferences as they provide connections and build relationships among pastors and congregations.
> —Lee Lever

Lever began as a denominational minister with Executive Leadership in August 2007.

He previously served for three years as associate conference minister with Western District Conference.

He has served as pastor of Eden Mennonite Church in Moundridge, Kan., and Menno Mennonite Church in Ritzville, Wash.

In 2005 and 2006, Lever also served as a consultant training congregational teams for Gospel in our Culture Network and Church Innovations.

Lever holds a master of divinity degree from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., and a doctor of ministry degree in congregational development from Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill.

Lee and Terri, his wife, are members of Faith Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan., and live in Moundridge. They have three adult children.

"I sense the Holy Spirit working within Mennonite Church USA in new ways, drawing us toward a renewed understanding of who we are and what we are to be about in the midst of changing times," says Lever.

Kauffmann has served as a conference minister for Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference since 2000.

Previously she served on the pastoral team of College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., for 19 years.

She also served for three years on the student services staff for the former Mennonite Board of Missions and taught youth ministries courses at Goshen (Ind.) College for four years.

Kauffmann is part of a pastors group that has been reflecting on the nature of missional leadership.

She says she is grateful for the opportunity to be part of the denominational ministry team and explore what it means to pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

"God is calling us to keep this question central in our lives no matter where we are serving," she says.

Kauffmann holds a master of divinity degree from AMBS and a doctor of ministry degree from Claremont (Calif.) School of Theology.

She and Joel, her husband, live in Goshen, Ind., and have two adult children.

Kauffmann is a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen.—*Mennonite Church USA*

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Details of The Corinthian Plan released

Mennonite Church USA employee benefit package has three deductible options.

The Corinthian Plan is the name of the employee benefit package that Mennonite Church USA has designed. Included are health, wellness features, life and disability coverage. Churches may also select dental and vision coverage.

Health coverage

The health coverage (provided by the Congregational Employee Plan) will have these deductible options: when only one person is covered: $1,150, $2,000 or $3,000; when a family is covered: $2,300, $4,000 or $6,000; and churches that apply for a subsidy will receive the $3,000/$6,000 deductible.

What the health plan covers

The health plan covers major medical expenses—hospital, outpatient, maternity, prescription drugs, diagnostic X-rays and lab tests, home-health services, mental health and substance abuse. The plan also covers physician office visits and rehabilitation services. After the deductible is met, all these expenses are covered at 100 percent (there are no copays). The lifetime maximum benefit for each person is $5 million.

To help control the cost of health care, benefits are provided through the Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Preferred Provider Organization program. To encourage participants to receive preventive care, the plan pays 100 percent of immunizations, physical exams, mammograms, gynecological exams and many preventive screenings as first dollar benefits that are not part of the deductible.

Wellness features

There are also incentives for adults to receive a wellness assessment (which gives specific individualized recommendations to improve health and reduce the risk of developing other health conditions) and to set and achieve wellness goals.

Life and disability insurance

Because these benefits are based on salary, the pastor (credentialed staff) or church employee (noncredentialed staff) must be paid for 10 or 30 hours per week, respectively. The life insurance benefit is equal to their annual salary—up to $65,000 maximum—and includes an equal amount of coverage for accidental death and dismemberment. Long-term disability coverage is equal to two-thirds of the employee's salary.

Health spending accounts

A variety of options are available to complement the health plan, including health savings accounts, health reimbursement arrangements and flexible spending accounts (as part of a Section 125 plan).

These options provide employees and congregations with ways to set aside tax-preferred dollars for health, dental or vision care. The options differ in terms of who can make contributions to them, whether the funds can be designated for only certain expenses and who owns the account.

To allow for a range of needs among congregations, all three are being offered.—*Keith Harder of Mennonite Church USA*

For more information: www.CorinthianPlan.com

MMA at 800-222-5054, ext. 364

Mennonite Church USA at 866-866-2872

Mennonite Church USA

Mennonite Church USA Vision:
God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

The Mennonite Church USA Search Committee asks for your prayers for calling a new Executive Director. If you think God might be calling you, read on and inquire. If you think of others who may be good candidates, please encourage them to apply or nominate them yourself.

We are seeking a dynamic Executive Director to lead Mennonite Church USA toward a Christ-centered spirituality and missional witness. The Executive Director, who is the chief executive officer and primary public spokesperson of the denomination, will inspire Mennonite Church USA through a compelling articulation of the vision, mission and priorities of the church. She/he will lead a team of staff to help bring alignment and synergy to the mission of agencies, executive staff functions and area conferences. A more complete job description may be viewed at www.MennoniteUSA.org/edsearch. Please send qualifications and/or questions to J. Richard Thomas at 2176 Lincoln Highway East, Lancaster, PA, 17602, by e-mail at thomasjr@lancastermennonite.org or by fax to (717) 299-0823. Responses should be received by April 30, 2009.

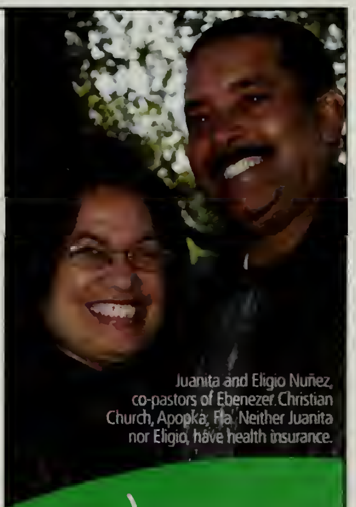
Individuals bringing diversity are encouraged to apply. Mennonite Church USA is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Mennonite Church USA conducts background investigations as part of the hiring process, and complies with federal and state requirements for nondiscrimination in employment with regard to sex, age, race, color, disability and national and ethnic origin.

Pastors should tend their flocks, not their health bills

As many as 100 pastors in Mennonite Church USA have little or no health care coverage. Together, we can do something about this crisis.

The Corinthian Plan is a new employee benefit program for Mennonite Church USA congregations. It can ensure that all pastors and church staff have access to health coverage and other benefits, regardless of their congregations' financial situations.

Congregations have until Oct. 1, 2009, to decide whether to participate. Don't delay. Visit **www.CorinthianPlan.com**



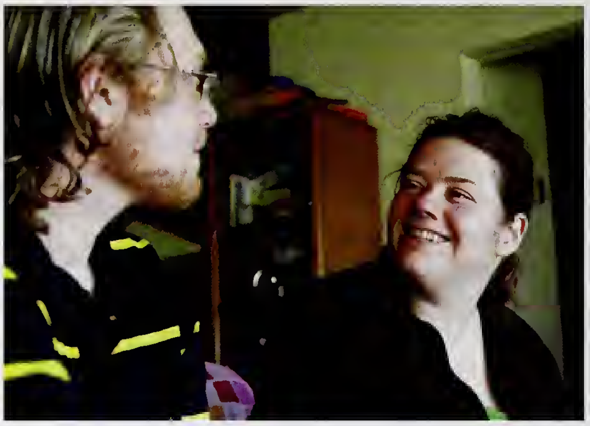
Juanita and Eligio Nuñez, co-pastors of Ebenezer Christian Church, Apopka, Fla. Neither Juanita nor Eligio, have health insurance.

The Corinthian Plan
Together, providing health care for pastors and church workers

Mennonite Church USA

Chicago Dwell unit focuses on advocacy

Director recruiting business, accounting majors, city planners for fall 2009.


Cara Rufenacht

Krista Dutt (right) with Jim Jordan at DOOR's Miami unit. Dutt leads the Chicago unit that will focus on advocacy and public policy.

Volunteers serving with the DOOR (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection) Dwell program in Chicago during this fall will bring a new focus on business and advocacy for faith-based justice.

Dwell is one facet of the DOOR program, a partner to Mennonite Mission Network's Christian Service ministries.

Dwell participants spend a year living in an intentional Christian community in a city while serving at a nonprofit organization.

In Chicago, rather than partnering with homeless shelters and other social work agencies, Dwell volunteers will work in agencies that directly address policy and the systems that perpetuate injustice throughout the city.

"We are recruiting the people that have not typically been recruited for volunteer positions, such as business majors, accounting majors, city planners and folks with community development background," says Krista Dutt, DOOR national program director and the director for Dwell in Chicago.

Volunteers will use their gifts and skills with local agencies to work at policy advocacy, grant writing, data gathering and a number of other behind-the-scenes tasks that have direct impact on education and housing policies, environmental justice and other causes throughout the city.

Chicago is a good place to test these skills. According to Dutt, in the initial city planning years ago, Chicago was laid out with highways and buildings meant to separate people by class, race and other criteria.

Public transportation is still laid out in ways that naturally make it difficult to get to and from certain neighborhoods.

In their work, volunteers will be thinking about ways to undo these systems of injustice.

"At DOOR, our philosophy of ministry emphasizes seeing the face of God in the city. We want an exchange of info and ideas between the folks that come to volunteer and the city," says Dutt.

"This form of data gathering and mutual exchange is a new piece for us. DOOR has always advocated in some ways, but this is another step."

For more information on DOOR's Dwell program and to apply online, visit this Web site: Service.MennoniteMission.net.

Dwell placements are also currently available in the following cities in the United States: Atlanta; Denver; Hollywood, Calif.; Miami and San Antonio, Texas.—*Hannah Heinzekehr of Mennonite Mission Network*

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AMBS

June 4 *Unmarried couples living together*

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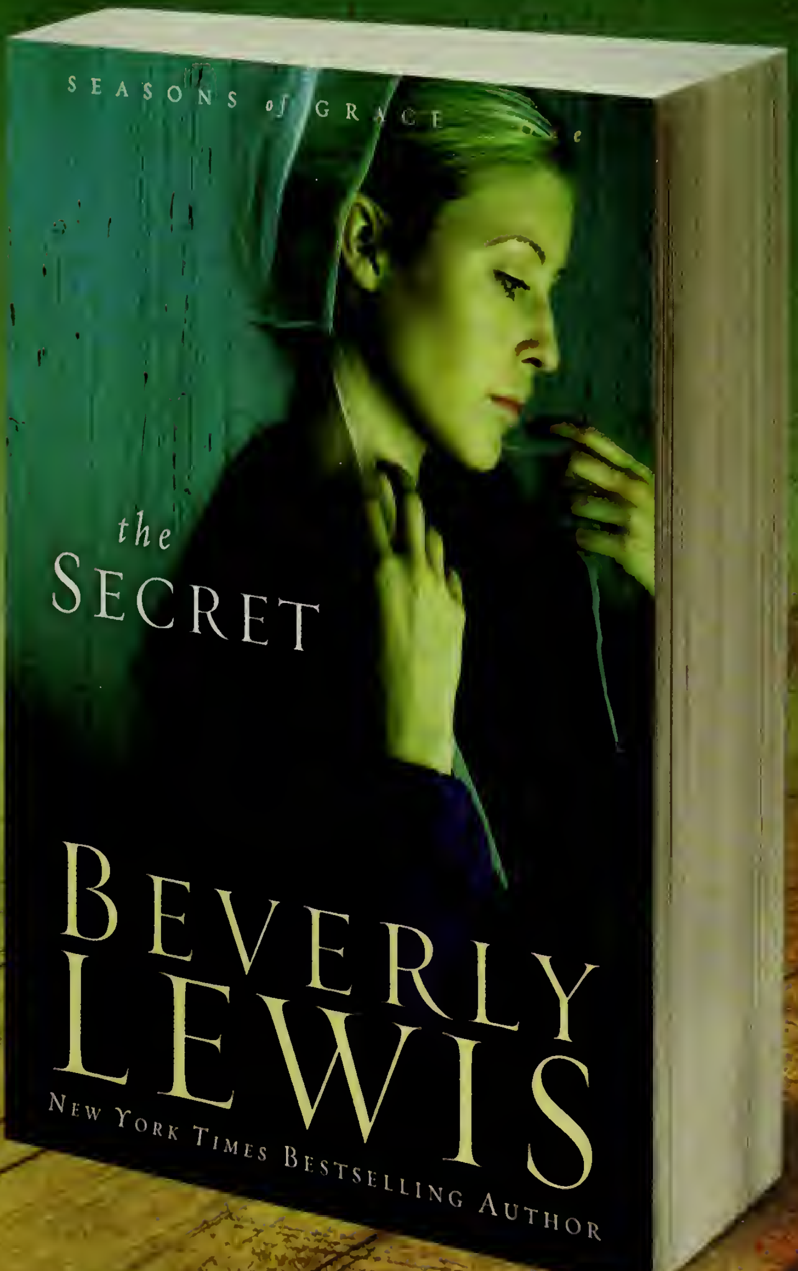
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CALENDAR

The Smithville Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio, will be celebrating their ***50th Anniversary*** on May 17. If you have ever been affiliated with Smithville Mennonite, we would love to have you join us in this celebration. For more information contact the church office. Phone: 330-669-3601 or Email at lmsmucker@smithvillemennonite.org.

Friendship Community, Lititz, Pa., will host its ***16th annual Festival and Auction***, May 8-9. Friendship hopes to raise $75,000. For more information, contact Betty Hess at Friendship Community 717-656-2466 ext. 165.

WORKERS

Fast, Melissa Fisher, was ordained as a pastor at Sunnyside Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind., on March 1.

Short, Joel, was installed as pastor at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Kouts, Ind., on March 8.

Weaver, Elyzabeth "Lyz," ended a term as pastor at Fellowship of Hope, Elkhart, Ind., on March 15.

Yoder, Daniel, was installed as youth pastor at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on Feb. 15.

Yoder, Talashia Keim, was licensed toward ordination and installed as youth pastor at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on Feb. 15.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Bergey, Heidi Cathleen and Ashlyn Emma (twins), Feb. 28, to Luke and Rachelle Marcho Bergey, Harleysville, Pa.

Burkholder, Braden Lee, Jan. 22, to Curtis Lee and Amy Meinert Burkholder, Indianapolis.

Dugan, Josiah Edward, Jan. 26, to David and Mary Jantzi Dugan, Morris, N.Y.

Fransen, Emily Elizabeth, March 12, to Timothy and Claudia Davenport Fransen, Portland, Ore.

Graber, Isaac Yoder, Jan. 7, to Phil and Andrea Yoder Graber, Newton, Kan.

Kaufman, Luke Alexander, Jan. 15, to Douglas and Tonya Kuhn Kaufman, Hollsopple, Pa.

Kaufmann, Madeleine Josie, Dec. 18, 2008, to Reid and Grayce Brown Kaufmann, Newton, Kan.

Landis, Jude Michael, March 15, to Eric and Bethany Souder Landis, Souderton, Pa.

Lasure, Addison Elizabeth, Feb. 11, to Matthew and Jenilee Speigle Lasure, Davidsville, Pa.

McCune, Lane Reuel, Feb. 24, to Doug and Rebekah Friesen McCune, Lennox, S.D.

Miller, Madison Joyce, Feb. 23, to Mike and Jennifer Ciesielski Miller, Wayland, Iowa.

Moon Dyke, Beatrix Hope, Nov. 4, 2008, to Gregory and Alyssa Moon Dyke, Surprise, Ariz.

Noggle, Kamilyn Elizabeth, Feb. 26, to Monty and Kasey Neufeld Noggle, Buhler, Kan.

Sartori, Eliana Anisa, Dec. 20, 2008, to Eric and Rachel Paulovich Sartori, Phoenix, Ariz.

Schmidt, Trestin Lee, Feb. 3, to Lee and Shanna Riegel Schmidt, Newton, Kan.

Schrock, Lawson Nathaniel, March 6, to Leon and Robin Schlabach Schrock, Parnell, Iowa.

Strycker, Riddick Marshall, Feb. 16, to Tim and Amy Strycker, Goshen, Ind.

Stutzman, Blake Parker, March 6, to Rodrick and Jill McKean Stutzman, Walnut Creek, Ohio.

Stutzman, Brittany Ann, March 6, to Michael and Tanya Hill Stutzman, Sarasota, Fla.

Swartzendruber, William David, Feb. 24, to David and Lisa DiGiandomenico Swartzendruber, Bryn Mawr, Pa.

Williams, Mia Jordan, Feb. 6, to Jason and Marcy Vanderveer Williams, Indianapolis, Ind.

Zook, Dane Emerson, Feb. 2, to Craig and Sharisa Keim Zook, Broadway, Va.

MARRIAGES

Bontreger/Thieme: Todd Bontreger, LeGrange, Ind., and Melissa Thieme, Ft. Wayne, Ind., Feb. 28, at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana, Ind.

Fitzpatrick/Kropf: Jesse Fitzpatrick, Portland, Ore., and Katrina Kropf, Hubbard, Ore., March 20, at the Kropf family home, Hubbard.

Gonzalez/Swan: Jose Gonzalez, Mount Pleasant, Iowa, and Nichole Swan, Mount Pleasant, March 14, at Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Mount Pleasant.

King/Rodak: Emiley King, Lancaster, Pa., and Matthew Rodak, Lancaster, Feb. 14, at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

McCullough/NieKamp: Kristen McCullough, Bluffton, Ohio, and Ryan NieKamp, Coldwater, Ohio, March 21, at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

"For the Record" is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. To submit information, log on to www.TheMennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access our online forms. You can also submit information by email, fax or mail:

- **Editor@TheMennonite.org**
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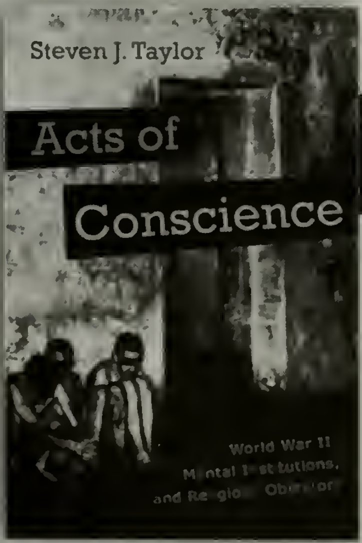

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DEATHS

Alderfer, Evelyn B. Landis, 84, Harleysville, Pa., died March 6. Spouse: Sanford A. Alderfer. Parents: Clinton D. and Ellen Beidler Landis. Children: Diane L. Kropf, Linda L. Martin, Sandy L., Dwight L.; 12 grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 9 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville.

Bartel, Rosa Linda, 91, Aberdeen, Idaho, died Feb. 2. Parents: Peter W. and Sara Becker Bartel. Funeral: March 4 at First Mennonite Church, Aberdeen.

Beckler, Lawrence W., 87, Seward, Neb., died March 8. Spouse: Lillian Stutzman-Eicher Beckler. Spouse: Della Reeb Beckler (deceased). Parents: William Wesley and Anna Roth Beckler. Children: Richard, Larry; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Step-children: Warren Eicher, Tamara Wergin, James Eicher; nine step-grandchildren; nine step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 17 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford, Neb.

Bontrager, Gregory Alan, 43, Wauseon, Ohio, died Feb. 17 of an apparent heart attack. Spouse: Nancy Sauder Bontrager. Parents: Emery and Emma Maxine Mast Bontrager. Children: Lauren Bontrager, Jordan Bontrager, Aaron, Bontrager, Carly Bontrager. Funeral: Feb. 23 at Pettisville Missionary Church, Pettisville, Ohio.

Brockmueller, Gordon Lee, 74, Freeman, S.D., died March 7 of cancer. Spouse: Shirley Waltner Brockmueller. Parents: Elias and Lillie Waltner Brockmueller. Children: Lee, Cindee Evenson, Joseph, Suzanne Koerner; 11 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: March 10 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Clemens, Pastor Philip Kaufmann, 67, Pandora, Ohio, died March 1 of cancer. Spouse: Nancy Musselman Clemens. Parents: Paul R. and Mary Kaufmann Clemens. Children: James E., Judith A. Smucker; four grandchildren. Funeral: March 4 at Pike Mennonite Church, Elida, Ohio.

Conrad, Shirley Ilene Gingerich, 69, Amana, Iowa, died Feb. 21 of cancer. Spouse: James Conrad. Parents: Ralph and Gertrude Miller Gingerich. Children: Michael, Ronald, Amy Yoder; three grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 25 at Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.

Crossgrove, Stella Mary Wyse, 96, Archbold, Ohio, died March 6. Spouse: Henry Crossgrove. Parents: William and Dinah Wyse. Child: Phillip; three grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; one step-great-grandchild. Funeral: March 11 at Central Mennonite Church, Fulton, Ohio.

Dahlenburg, Paul William, 93, Mountain Lake, Minn., died Feb. 25. Spouse: Marie Olfert Dahlenburg. Bessie Anna Jones (deceased). Parents: William and Marie Delia Paul Dahlenburg. Children: JoAnn Loewen, Treva Steinle, Pauline Schroeder, Ken, Larry; 15 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 28 at Alliance Missionary Church, Mountain Lake.

Friesen, Helen Elisabeth Wiebe, 83, Mountain Lake, Minn., died March 2. Spouse: Willard Friesen. Parents: John H. and Martha Claassen Wiebe. Children: Donald, Douglas, Alan; 10 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 7 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake.

Geiser, Mabel Neuenschwander, 85, Apple Creek, Ohio, died March 4. Spouse: George Geiser (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Lydia Neuenschwander. Children: Winifred Geiser, Rich, Glenn, Hazel Yoder, Betty Yoder, Lou Miller, Carol Weaver, Kathy Geiser, Bonnie Geiser, Lydia Troyer, Tena Gerber, Ruth Nussbaum, Mille Drew, Jeff; 22 grandchildren; 31 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 7 at Kidron Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio.

New Books Offering Food for Lean Times

Long After I'm Gone: A Father-Daughter Memoir, Deborah Good with Nelson Good. "An intimate, honest, and heartfelt portrait of a quiet hero."—*Daniel Charles* 208 p; $13.95

A Persistent Voice: Marian Franz and Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation, Marian Franz and more. "Marian's gentle daring and humble boldness live on in these powerful essays." —*Ronald J. Sider.* 212 p; $19.95

A Hundred Camels: A Mission Doctor's Sojourn and Murder Trial in Somalia, Dr. Gerald L. Miller. "This vivid, compelling story becomes a vehicle of beauty." —*Jean Janzen.* 228 p; $14.95

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PENNSYLVANIA to EUROPE (June 19-July 2)
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EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN SHARP (June 29-July 12)
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SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29-August 11)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (September 5-18)
THE ROAD to JERUSALEM (September 11-22)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE for GERMAN-SPEAKING PERSONS (September 16-29)
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Gingerich, Philip E., 87, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 28 of a heart attack. Spouse: Faith Cooley Gingerich (deceased). Parents: Albert J. and Josephine Miller Gingerich. Children: Joan Morningstar, Susan Shetler, Amy Schrock, Paul, Stan, Mark; 19 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 4 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Hartman, Freman S., 89, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 28. Spouse: Esther Mishler Nelson Hartman. Spouse: Birdena Troyer Hartman (deceased). Parents: Amos and Susie Lehman Hartman. Children: Donna Oswalt, Elaine Thorpe, Charles Hartman, Floyd Hartman, Bert Hartman, David Nelson, Nancy Jackson; 16 grandchildren; three step-grandsons; 20 great-grandchildren; two step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 4 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana, Ind.

Hirstein, Velma Arlene, 83, Eureka, Ill., died March 17. Parents: Aaron B. and Martha E. Showalter Hirstein. Graveside service: March 20 at Collum, Ill.

Hofstetter, Anne Gerber, 89, Dalton, Ohio, died March 1. Spouse: Clayton Hofstetter (deceased). Parents: Philip and Pauline Gerber. Children: Ken, Carol Fielitz; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 6 at Kidron Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio.

Hofstetter, Fern Gerber, 89, Kidron, Ohio, died Feb. 5. Spouse: Milton Hofstetter (deceased). Parents: Aden and Sarah Gerber. Children: Earl, Betty Prater, Doris Smith, Mary Jean Arney, Irene Young, Barbara Miller, Harold; 12 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 9 at Kidron Mennonite Church.

Kauffman, Fannie Irene Herschberger, 75, Middlebury, Ind., died Feb. 22. Spouse: Harvey Kauffman. Parents: Eli A. and Alma Miller Herschberger. Children: Rick, Gayle Kohlmeyer, Darwin, Sonja Neal; 10 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 28 at First Mennonite Church, Middlebury.

Liechty, Herman, 88, Archbold, Ohio, died Feb. 20. Spouse: Doris Schertz Liechty (deceased). Parents: Joseph and Emma Frey Liechty. Children: Carolyn Wenger, Allen, Phyllis Nofziger, Eric, Barbara Detweiler, Rachel Eby, Rita Gingrich; 20 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 25 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Martens, Billie Jean Schroll, 87, Inman, Kan., died March 3. Spouse: Edward Martens. Parents: William Dayten and Grace Pedicord Schroll. Funeral: March 5 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

Miller, Alice Marie Shoemaker, 90, Springs, Pa., died March 7. Spouse: Lowell Miller (deceased). Parents: Ellis D. and Nettie Maust Shoemaker. Children: C. Kent, Kevin L.; two grandchildren. Funeral: March 10 at Newman Funeral Homes, Grantsville, Md.

Miller, Velma Johns, 92, Orrville, Ohio, died March 12. Spouse: Arthur D. Miller. Parents: Otis N. and Margaret Johns. Children: Janet Sommer, Frederic, Dr. John K.; nine grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 16 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville, Ohio.

Mohler, Carl M., 76, Stevens, Pa., died Feb. 24 in a house fire. Spouse: Electa Keens Mohler. Parents: Martin K. and Barbara Siegrist Mohler. Children: Cynthia E. Good, Lois M. Mishler, Sarah A. Sauder, Jewel E. Horst; eight grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 28 at Ephrata Mennonite Church, Ephrata, Pa.

Oberg, Anita L. Ebersole, 83, Sterling, Ill., died March 16. Spouse: Doug Oberg (deceased). Parents: Roy H. and Ruth Nice Ebersole. Funeral: March 20 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling.

Penner, Luella Esther Tieszen, 86, Freeman, S.D., died Feb. 28. Spouse: Randolph Vernon Penner (deceased). Parents: Dr. Henry P. and Aganetha Ewert Tieszen. Funeral: March 6 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Powell, Gertrude Ada Kauffman, 92, South English, Iowa, died March 12. Spouse: John S. Powell (deceased). Parents: Noah D. and Kate Egli Kauffman. Children: Daniel Powell, Kathleen Troyer; three grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 14 at Wellman Mennonite Church, Wellman, Iowa.

Regier, Phyllis Ann Bartel, 86, Moundridge, Kan., died Feb. 5. Spouse: John Warren Regier. Parents: Jacob and Rosella Regier Bartel. Child: Kathy Regier. Funeral: Feb. 21 at West Zion Mennonite Church, Moundridge.

Richer, Marjorie J. Brenneman, 83, Archbold, Ohio, died Feb. 28 of a stroke. Spouse: Ora Richer. Parents: Rhuda and Elnora Brenneman. Children: Mike, Brooks, Marcia Lehman, Ken; 13 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 7 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Stalter, Kathryn L. Mumaw, 88, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 20. Spouse: John Stalter. Parents: Enos and Ruth Lehman Mumaw. Children: Stanford, Kathleen Ann Najar, Loretta Jane Cross; one grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 26 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Steckley, Mildred Roth, 80, Albany, Ore., died Feb. 1 of leukemia. Spouse: Norman B. Steckley. Parents: Christian B. and Mary Roth. Children: Cheryl Wagner, Norma Steckley; six grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 5 at Albany Mennonite Church.

Weaver, Doris, 60, Lancaster, Pa., died March 9. Parents: Paul M. and Evelyn Dennis Weaver. Memorial service: March 11 at East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster.

Winsinger, Joy A. Stucky, 93, Goessel, Kan., died Feb. 10. Spouse: William Winsinger. Parents: Edward T. and Bessie Libich Stucky. Funeral: Feb. 14 at Moundridge Funeral Home, Moundridge, Kan.

Yoder, Thomas D., 79, Normal, Ill., died Jan. 31. Spouse: Hazel Zehr Yoder. Parents: David and Arie Yoder. Children: Dawn Yoder Harms, Scot, Mark; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 4 at Mennonite Church of Normal.

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

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RESOURCES

118 Days: Christian Peacemaker Teams Held Hostage in Iraq, edited by Tricia Gates Brown (Cascadia Publishing House and CPT, 2009, $17.95), tells the story of CPT members Tom Fox and Jim Looney along with delegation members Norman Kember and Harmeet Sooden, who were kidnapped on Nov. 26, 2005. Fox was killed on March 9, 2006, while the others were freed two weeks later, after 118 days of captivity.

Like Those Who Dream: Sermons for Salford Mennonite Church and Beyond by James C. Longacre (Cascadia Publishing House and Herald Press, 2009, $18.95) draws readers into the meaning, joy and culture-subverting power of the faith. The sermons engage in issues of suffering, judgment, family fights, war and peace, capitalism and its effects, dignity and justice for those on the lower rungs of wealth or power.

Loving Enemies: A Manual for Ordinary People by Randy and Joyce Klassen (Cascadia Publishing House and Herald Press, 2008, $13.95) is a manual for ordinary people willing to commit themselves to selfless love.

Peace to War: Shifting Allegiances in the Assemblies of God by Paul Alexander (Cascadia Publishing House and Herald Press, 2009, $26.95) tells the story of how the Pentecostal peace witness was muted and almost lost in the American Assemblies of God.

In Harm's Way: A History of Christian Peacemaker Teams by Kathleen Kern (Cascade Books, 2009, $49) is the story of CPT, of Christians willing to risk their lives in nonviolent actions that aim to advance peace and justice in such places as the Middle East, Haiti and Central America.

Follow Me: A History of Christian Intentionality by Ivan J. Kauffman (Wipf & Stock, 2009, $30) tells the story of communities of like-minded believers—some of lay evangelicals and others of celibate monastics—formed based upon their common desire to live more intentional Christian lives.

The Lone Tree: A Novel by James D. Yoder (Infinity Publishing, 2009, $14.95) tells the story of Lusanna Becker, who leaves Polish-Russia in 1874 with her family and congregation. When they arrive in Hutchinson, Kan., they are met with rejection and must travel by boxcar to Florence, Kan., in minus-14-degree weather.

Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity by Walter Klaassen and William Klassen (Herald Press, 2008, $32.99) places the life, work and theology of this early Anabaptist leader in the context of his violent, changing times.

Thy Maker Is Thy Husband by Martha Nighswander (CMCO Publications, 2009, $14.95) considers how every aspect of marriage and married life is symbolical of something we may experience in our relationship with Christ and thus applies to singles.

No Enemy to Conquer: Forgiveness in an Unforgiving World by Michael Henderson (Baylor University Press, 2009, $19.95) reports true stories that demonstrate that forgiving and asking for forgiveness are not merely personal or religious actions but can influence national and international affairs.

Reordered Love, Reordered Lives: Learning the Deep Meaning of Happiness by David K. Naugle (Eerdmans, 2008, $18) explains that if we love properly—that is, if we love beginning with God and progressing to other humans, ourselves and the world around us—we will also live properly and, in so doing, find our own true happiness.

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Faculty position in the Conflict Transformation Program of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding: Full-time, continuing faculty position in a graduate program in conflict transformation with a specialization in development and restorative justice. Earned doctorate in conflict transformation or a related discipline required. Applicants should have teaching or training experience, along with field experience in international and/or community development. Complementary experience in restorative and/or transitional justice is desired. Position begins August 2009. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, official transcripts and three references to Lee Snyder, Interim Provost, **Eastern Mennonite University**, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, or email provost@emu.edu. Applicants may be asked to respond to questions specific to EMU's mission after the initial inquiry. For more information visit our Web site at www.emu.edu/humanresources. People who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Goshen College seeks ***full-time communication professor and coordinator of video production*** to begin July 1, 2009. Responsible for teaching video production and broadcast writing and supervising the college video production unit, including videography and editing. Master's degree preferred; teaching experience desired. To apply, see the position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment. Women and minorities are especially encouraged to apply. Goshen College, an affirmative action employer, is a liberal arts institution affiliated with Mennonite Church USA.

Mennonite Publishing Network seeks a ***full-time*** person to serve as ***editorial director of Herald Press***, its book imprint. Responsibilities: serve on the Publisher's Management Team to help set overall strategy and direction; provide leadership of detailed planning for Herald Press titles; manage process of preparing accepted manuscripts for production. Qualifications: knowledge of and experience in book publishing—both in planning and in management of the publishing process; ability to work collaboratively as part of a publishing team; a disciple of Jesus Christ and a convinced Anabaptist; commitment to the vision and mission of the MPN Board and its governing denominations (Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada). Contact Ron Rempel, Executive Director/Publisher, Mennonite Publishing Network, rrempel@mpn.net, 519-496-9487.

Director of Project Development (new position) with a minimum of five years of supervisor/management experience, preferably in retirement services and health-related fields. Prefer experience in development of new programs, and project management. Minimum bachelor's degree. Send a letter along with a resumé to Steven Ringenberg, at **Fairlawn Haven Nursing Home**, located at 407 E. Lutz Road, Archbold, OH 43502.

Rockaway Mennonite Collegiate, a dynamic school with a current enrollment of 325 students (grade 6-12), invites applications for the position of ***principal***. Duties will begin either Feb. 1 or Sept. 1, 2010. The successful candidate will possess commitment to the Mennonite church and Christian education, successful and proven administrative and management experience; teacher certificate of qualification. Experience or training in the following areas would be an asset: theological training, cross cultural experience, secondary school experience, principal's certification. "Together we shape great lives through learning, opportunity, caring and faith." Applications should be sent to: Brian Hunsberger, Personnel Chair, huns.schaff@sympatico.ca; www.rockway.ca. Deadline for applications is April 30, 2009.

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) invites nominations and/or applications for the position of ***president***, expected to assume office sometime between Jan. 1, 2010, and July 1, 2010. AMBS is a fully accredited post-graduate seminary located in Elkhart, Ind., affiliated with Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. Additional information about the seminary and a complete description of this position can be located at www.ambs.edu.
Qualifications: The ideal candidate for president will be an active follower of Jesus, a convinced Anabaptist and an advocate for the missional church in a diverse theological, denominational and faith context; have ability and passion for theological education and pastoral formation that includes new models of church, ministry and pedagogy; be a creative, entrepreneurial, visionary leader; demonstrate theological depth and have earned an advanced degree (Ph.D. or D.Min. strongly preferred); understand and be committed to the missions of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA.
Search process: Nominations and/or letters of application with CV or résumé may be submitted to Randall Jacobs, Chair of the Search Committee, c/o AMBSsearch@mennoniteeducation.org or through postal mail to AMBS Presidential Search Committee, c/o Mennonite Education Agency, 63846 County Road 35, Suite 1, Goshen, IN 46528-9621. The search committee will begin reviewing applications in Spring 2009 and continue until the position is filled. Women and minority people are encouraged to apply. AMBS, an affirmative action employer, is committed to Christian beliefs and values as interpreted by the Mennonite church.

Greeley Mennonite Church in beautiful northern Colorado desires candidates for the position of full-time ***lead pastor***. We seek a dedicated Anabaptist to provide spiritual and church growth leadership (as a friend, listener and teacher) and thoughtful sermons for our warm congregation of 60+ members. Salary provided in accordance with Mennonite Church USA guidelines. Contact Herm Weaver at 303-895-0801; herm@MountainStatesMC.org.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email Advertising@TheMennonite.org.

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Community shapes us

Regina Shands Stoltzfus teaches peace, justice and conflict studies at Goshen (Ind.) College.

In the collection of candles and candle holders that I've gathered over the years, a few are simple, such as the Ball canning jar that holds a candle nestled in a bedding of multicolored sand. A few years ago I officiated at a wedding. On that December evening, participants in the ceremony, including me, carried these lanterns. The colors of the layers of sand were yellow and blue, the colors worn by the bride and groom. Two people, surrounded by friends and family, joined their lives together that day.

After the wedding, my lantern sat on my kitchen table for several weeks; eventually I moved it into a cabinet. Not long ago, as I was putting dishes away, I spied the jar and decided to bring it to my office. After nearly two years of being carried about and placed here and there, the colors of the sand layers had mixed a bit, but the layers were still discernable—bright yellow and cobalt blue. The original candle had long burnt low, and I had replaced it a couple of times. Now I put another new candle in the sand, carefully placed the jar in a box in the back seat of my car and drove to work, dropping my son off at school along the way. Somewhere along the way, the jar tipped over on its side. Now the sand was even more mixed up together.

Community in its many shapes and forms is good. But we have to let it do what it does—hold one another and shape us into something new.

Families and communities are created in order to fulfill the human needs—the basic needs of survival, to be sure—food, warmth, shelter. Living in community creates a structure for those needs to be met more efficiently than what would be possible as individuals. Entering a shared living experience—as roommates or housemates, as a married couple or as an intentional community, for examples—certainly requires a measure of self-awareness. Yet we are only able to enter into such arrangements based on who we know ourselves to be at the time. There is a measure of mystery about who we will become. How will the passage of time shape and mold us, and how will shared living shift us into new—or at least different—people? Perhaps we lose sight of the possibility—the probability—of change.

Remembering my early parenting years, I am astonished at how quickly they passed, as more mature parents assured me they would. But what I find more remarkable is how I changed. The reality of living in a household full of distinct personalities helped me grow into a different kind of person from what I thought I knew myself to be. There are many examples of how this came about, but nothing brought it home to me more clearly than having a troubled child on whose behalf I requested prayers from everyone who knew me. I learned that reaching out in all our ragged despair for shoulders to lean on was much more important than presenting an image of our family to the world that said, We've got it all together. We're a good family. I had to give myself and my family some slack. In order to get through the hard times, I had to let go of the notion of myself as the kind of person who doesn't need help and can solve my own problems. I had to shift.

In these troubled times (and there have been troubled times before) it is all the more urgent that households and families learn to lean upon each other. The Preacher in Ecclesiastes declares, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other … if two lie together, they keep warm. … A threefold cord is not quickly broken" (4:9-12).

Community in its many shapes and forms is good. But we have to let community do what it does—hold one another and shape us into something new. It does not mean losing ourselves, becoming less or being subsumed by the other.

True, those grains of sand in the jar don't have sharply distinct layers any longer. Yet the blue grains and the yellow grains swirl and move about, creating new patterns and designs. If I wanted to, I could scoop out a spoonful and carefully, painstakingly separate the colors from one another. And on close inspection, I discover there has been another color there all along—red grains of sand in the mix that I never paid attention to.

Every now and then I light the candle in the jar as a reminder of God's Spirit dwelling among the families of the earth. As the flame burns, the wax pools over the shifting sands, the mixture of colors that is now a new thing.

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

Continued from page 5

crafts and telling their stories in our community. We are mission-driven, and as a Ten Thousand Villages U.S. wholesale account, we will continue to offer hand-crafted products from our Ten Thousand Villages artisan partners. I invite everyone to visit Southeast Colorado, and while you are here stop and enjoy the unique shopping experience at CrossRoads.—*Pat Miller, manager, CrossRoads MarketPlace*

Appalled by column on adoption

Since I'm serving with Mennonite Central Committee in Indonesia, I get *The Mennonite* late. There may have already been wise responses to the Speaking Out ("A Biblical Consideration for Adoption," Feb. 17). But I feel compelled to add what is hopefully another.

My spouse and I chose to form a family through adoption, and I am an advocate for adoption. However, I found the column by C. Richie an appalling and chilling perpetuation of some horrific and dangerous myths about adoption. I take particular exception to the implication that adoptive parents who relinquish "the ability to have biological children" are somehow paragons of selflessness and generosity swooping in to save unwanted, unloved children from a life of "hell on earth" who will then be rewarded by the great love of the child for the "parents who come and pick them out of a life of destitution."

There is so much wrong with that, it makes me ill. People adopt for a variety of reasons, few of them selfless. Many children and adults live in deplorable and unjust conditions in our world. Children, because they are most vulnerable, too often end up as victims of poverty and politics. But they are not necessarily unloved or unwanted. Extreme circumstances cause some parents to feel their only options are to give a child over to someone else to raise or to abandon them. Blythe, offhand statements about "parents who didn't want them" hide not only the pain experienced by birth parents but the social, economic and political conditions that we adoptive parents share in creating that pain.

I love my children more than I could have thought possible and am humbled and honored every day to be permitted to be their mother. But I know that my joy in being their mother is built on the backs of injustice that led to their relinquishment by parents and family somewhere in China they may never know and by my snatching them away from a culture, language and heritage that is rightfully theirs. That there is love in our family is God's grace, not that I saved them.—*Elaine Swartzentruber, Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

Reverse church growth?

In "Blessed Insurance" (March 3), Marco Guete is quoted as saying, "Of the 15 Mennonite Church USA congregations in Texas, 10 of them use Spanish as their primary language." That statement is incorrect. It would be correct in one of the following variations:

1. "Of the 15 Mennonite Church USA congregations in Texas affiliated with Western District Conference ..."
2. "Of the 15 Mennonite Church USA congregations in mid-Texas ..."
3. "Of the 23 Mennonite Church USA congregations in Texas ..."—in which case, the number that use primarily Spanish would need to be changed from 10 to at least 14, with the other four affiliated with South Central Conference being bilingual and using both Spanish and English in their worship services.

There are eight Mennonite Church USA congregations in Texas affiliated with South Central Conference. Probably the most correct version would be number 2 above, since not all the other characteristics would apply to all of the pastors in the SCC churches.

All 15 of those congregations in mid-Texas now affiliated with Western District Conference were dually affiliated with SCC up until a year or so ago, when all were encouraged to end the dual affiliation—since either way they belonged to Mennonite Church USA—and to choose which area conference they preferred to identify with. All 15 chose WDC. So SCC "lost" 15 churches. Reverse church growth?—*Bill Zuercher, Hesston, Kan.*

Why end *The Shack* debate?

Regarding the editor's note in the *The Mennonite* regarding the book *The Shack*: Our Sunday school class at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., focused on this in one of our sessions. We were surprised when the Jan. 20 Mediaculture column was published. We were amazed with the note that you did not want any more letters on the subject. Surely *The Mennonite* is more openminded than what these notes from the editor may first suggest.—*Lee M. Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Why publish the names of givers?

I am frankly dismayed that church agencies have forgotten Jesus' reminder that the widow's mite was better than all the big givers. Some even list these in order of how much more they gave and sometimes honor the big givers with positions on their boards. Is this the way of Christ or the way of the world?—*Don Reber, Goshen, Ind.*

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Everett J. Thomas

Easter chaos

What you see as chaos, I see as a fractal.
—Papa (God) in *The Shack*

God died on Good Friday. There could be no more chaos in the universe than in those hours between Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. But what the disciples experienced as chaos during those hours—and what we experience as chaos today—God sees differently.

The chaos for the disciples began when a colleague, Judas Iscariot, betrayed Jesus with a kiss. It continued later that night as Peter, now the leader of the disciples, three times denied that he knew Jesus.

I imagine the disciples gathering in shock and gloom the evening of the crucifixion—just 24 hours after their Lord asked them to pray with him in the Garden of Gesthamane.

The chaos continued with a wildly improbable tale from Mary on Sunday morning: The stone that covered Jesus' tomb was rolled away, and his body was missing. Among the clearest evidences of this chaos is the account of the disciples walking on the road to Emmaus. In the Luke 24 telling of this event, two of the disciples were so blinded by the chaos in their lives that they did not even recognize Jesus as he walked and talked with them.

What seems chaos is a gift when we wait for God to use it in our lives.

Several weeks ago, during a conversation with Jim Schrag, Mennonite Church USA's executive director, I asked him how our church looked to him as he neared the end of his tenure and retirement. He did not describe our situation as chaotic but described this period of uncertainty as a time to wait on God's Spirit to bring forth a new thing.

The conversation reminded me of a favorite Hebrew word in Genesis 1: The King James Version describes God's Spirit as "brooding" over the "face of the deep" before creation. Just as a mother hen broods over the eggs in her nest, I imagine a loving God brooding over what would have been chaos—a "formless void"—before there was day and night, before heaven was separated from the earth, before there were green plants and animals, before Adam (literally "earth") and before Eve (literally "life").

The uncertainties of our world today—economic recession, interminable wars, divisions among earnest and well-meaning people of faith—can leave us feeling hopeless. But God is still brooding over what looks like chaos. What is birthed from God's nurturing presence cannot be predicted or managed.

In *The Shack*, William Young has God ("Papa") explaining to the desperately sad Mack that what afflicts him is not chaos but a fractal—a geometric pattern that is repeated on ever smaller scales to produce irregular shapes and surfaces that cannot be represented by classical geometry. Fractals are used especially in computer modeling of irregular patterns and structures in nature.

What would it mean for us to relinquish our need to control and to predict the future of the church—and believe what happens is not chaos? What would it mean to yield our prescriptions for our adult children and trust that God will work some new thing in their lives far better than what we might have imagined? What would it mean to believe that what looks like chaos is exactly the place God is producing "irregular shapes and surfaces that cannot be represented by classical geometry."

During Holy Week this year, we can immerse ourselves in the uncertainty of those hours between noon on Good Friday and Easter Sunday morning. If in our unsettledness we trust God to create a new thing in us, we, too, can rise on Easter Sunday morning with renewed hope and joy.

"Almighty God," Phyllis Tickle prays in *The Divine Hours*, "you know my necessities before I ask and my ignorance in asking: Have compassion on my weakness and mercifully give me those things which … for my blindness I cannot ask."

What seems chaos is a gift when we wait for God to use it in our lives. Jesus' resurrection emerged from the chaos of the crucifixion.—*ejt*

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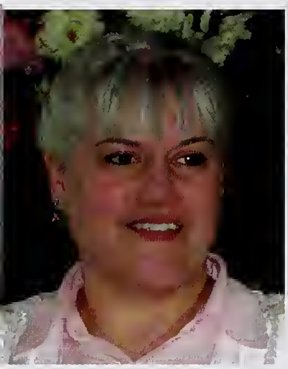
Giving and receiving

It is more blessed to give than to receive.—Acts 20:35b



Donna Mast is co-pastor of Scottdale (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

It is better to give than to receive. For the person brought up in the arms of the church, this could be one of those "lessons I learned in kindergarten," Sunday school kindergarten at least.

"Today we're going to make cards to give to special people in the congregation, because God wants us to show our love, and it is better to give than to receive."

"Put the quarter in the offering basket because God loves a cheerful giver. No, we don't take money out of the basket; we put money in the basket because it is better to give than to receive."

I learned the lesson well. My parents' training neatly complimented those of the Sunday school teacher. "When we go Christmas shopping, we buy for others, not ourselves. It is better to give than to receive." Birthdays of siblings were even better training grounds because there was an opportunity to give without any expectation of receiving something yourself on those occasions.

I want to be known as a giving person. Probably most of us do. It is the antidote to a selfish lifestyle, and who wants to be known as a selfish person anyway? Some people report that they feel closer to God when they are giving themselves away. Some people give of their time and abilities and call it service. Others give of their money and call it tithing or offering or stewardship. In many ways, it is a spiritual discipline to give.

I've begun to wonder if receiving could also be considered a spiritual discipline—certainly not in a greedy or grabbing way but receiving in a gracious and thankful manner. I know when I am in the position of giving, to have my gift received with joy and gratitude certainly pleases me. The receiver has gifted me, in return, with the happy response.

It is easier to be in the position of the giver, because that implies having plenty. To be the receiver implies being in a position of need, not a fun place to be. Perhaps that is why Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. It feels better to give out of a place of abundance than it does to be the one who lacks and needs.

I've overheard refusals to receive assistance at church fellowship meals and seen the disappointment on the face of the one who wanted to give. People who refuse seldom realize that those offering assistance are worried about unsteady gaits or trembling hands and simply want to maintain independence. It is a spiritual discipline to let go of pride and a gift to the other to become a bit dependent, if only for a few moments.

At a recent pastor's meeting, someone presented the idea that Mennonites are really great at service, but if we want to be a truly mission-minded people, we need to learn how to receive. Yes, we have wonderful things to give, tremendous insights about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, abilities to help others learn how to live in better ways, but to only give to those who need what we have and not receive from them what they have to give is to build barriers rather than to build God's kingdom.

Jesus had a few things to say about receiving as well as giving. "Receive the Holy Spirit." "Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." "Receive the kingdom like a child"—that speaks of joy to me. Perhaps we need to give *and* receive more joyfully, graciously, thankfully. Perhaps, as we learn to be better givers *and* receivers, God—and we—will be blessed. TM

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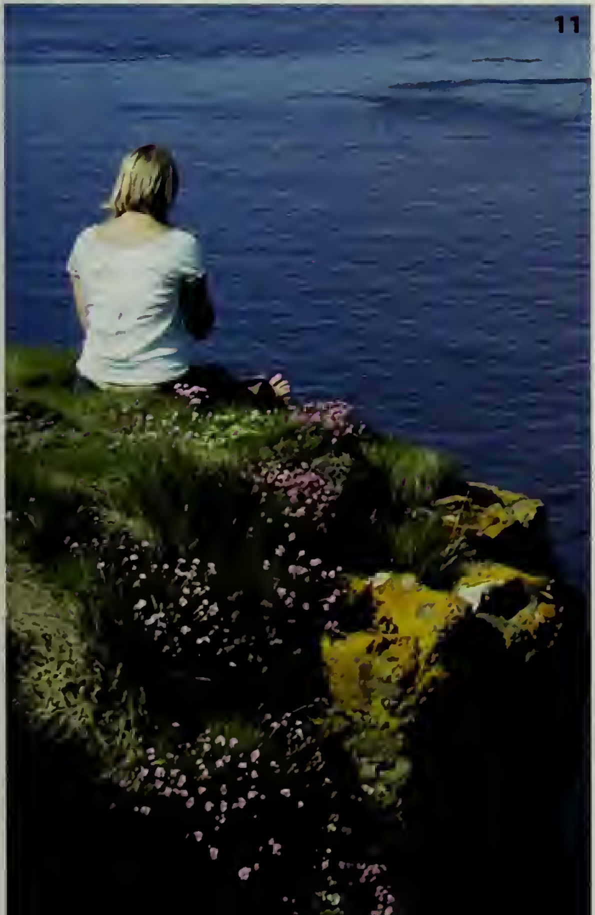
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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Articles perpetuate stereotypes

Keeping up with *The Mennonite* online from my temporary home in Paraguay, I was delighted to see an issue at least partly devoted to the Mennonites who live in this country. My wife and I have spent the better part of six months working with the Spanish-speaking Mennonite Conference (CONEMPAR) and read with interest what the issue would have to say about this significant and growing part of the Mennonite church. The answer was not surprising—very little.

In the capital of Asunción and elsewhere, the word "Mennonite" is generally used by the public to refer to someone who is white-skinned and speaks German. This is not limited to outsiders. Conversations with some German-speaking Mennonites reveal a deep-seated sense that "Mennonite" is a cultural and racial marker—not a religious one. Confusion often arises when members of our Mission Network team with "Mennonite last names" do not speak German. "But you are Mennonite, right?" they ask. Comments are frequently made that "Paraguayans do it that way, but we Mennonites [read: German Mennonites] would never do that."

Saddest of all, Latino Mennonites also use this lexicon in describing themselves. I will be the first to admit that the cultural dynamics of the Paraguayan Mennonite Church are complex. I know that it can be difficult to cover everything objectively. Even so, articles in a Mennonite Church USA publication that seem to equate "Mennonite" with a certain cultural or ethnic setting are inappropriate. I expect a higher degree of balance and inclusion from a churchwide magazine, and so I'll look forward to the following issue about CONEMPAR.—*Craig Mast, San Lorenzo, Paraguay*

IN THIS ISSUE

From time to time several people send us manuscripts that pertain to the same dimension of spiritual life. When this happens we receive it as evidence of God's Spirit moving across the face of Mennonite Church USA. The feature articles in this issue (pages 8-17) are another example of this movement; in this case the articles all focus on prayer and stories of how prayer changed situations and attitudes. In this issue we also introduce a subject new to our pages: How should congregations respond to a convicted sex offender when the offender wants to become part of the congregation. Anna Groff (page 20) did extensive research on this difficult matter and then wrote an editorial (page 32) to share some of her learnings. Scott Eldredge (page 22) describes how the Ambler (Pa.) Mennonite Church responded.—*Editor*

Abortion is always wrong

In "The Generosity of Jesus" (Grace and Truth, March 17), Clarence Rempel points out that Jesus died because he refused violent self-protection. As followers of Jesus we must also refuse violent self-protection. This would have to mean that directly or deliberately killing an unborn baby to save the life of the baby's mother would be wrong, since it is always wrong to use lethal violence, even for self-protection, or to protect someone else. Since it is wrong to use lethal violence to kill someone who deliberately attacks, killing an innocent baby in this type of situation seems to be even more obviously wrong.

I remember a discussion—before we officially adopted *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*—when someone said in reference to the section that says war, the death penalty and abortion are violent and against the will of God, "Passing a statement like this doesn't mean we have to oppose all abortions." Yes it does. Anyone who suggests otherwise should logically claim that our confession of faith does not necessarily forbid "just wars" or executing criminals under certain circumstances.

Some Mennonites support war and the death penalty, but such individuals would probably admit they don't support the Mennonite peace position. Some Mennonites who advocate abortion under certain circumstances claim to be legitimate advocates of Christian nonviolence, when in reality they are just as selectively homicidal as just war advocates.—*Jerry C. Stanaway, Lombard, Ill.*

Response to open letter

We are writing in response to the "Open Letter to Mennonite Church USA" that calls for the denomination to welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. We affirm the call for a church that, in the words of the letter, "offers Christ's radical hospitality and extravagant love to everyone." In this spirit, our congregation adopted a welcoming statement in 2002 that affirms hospitality in a variety of areas: "Bethel College Mennonite Church welcomes into fellowship and membership all persons who confess faith in Jesus Christ, without regard to their race, ethnic background, gender, age, sexual orientation, education, ability and other factors which give rise to discrimination and marginalization."

We recognize that letters or statements such as these can be interpreted in different ways and can result in unintended consequences and assumptions. For that reason, we welcome ongoing dialogue in the spirit of love as we seek to follow Jesus as a community of faith.—*Heidi Regier*

Kreider, pastor, and Ruth R. Harder, associate pastor, Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, Kan.

Magazines should get postage free

I find the article "The Death and Life of Great American Newspapers" in the April 6 issue of *The Nation* of some interest. The authors propose that the government needs to begin subsidizing newspapers so that a vigorous press may continue. This no doubt would cause the Libertarians apoplexy, but if everyone else is being subsidized, the press ought to get in on it.

I get particularly interested in a comment on page 18: "Let's eliminate postal rates for periodicals that garner less than 20 percent of their revenues from advertising. This keeps alive all sorts of magazines and journals of opinion that are being devastated by distribution costs."

This reminds me of the postage conflicts of the past and how when the brave idea came out to make the USPS self-supporting, postage costs keep going up. I seem to remember Daniel Kauffman writing about postage going up in a day when the government policy was evidently something like what the article is proposing: subsidize postage so there can be a free exchange of opinion throughout the land.

I am sure *The Mennonite* does not expect any relief today or tomorrow, but at least someone is thinking about these issues.—*Daniel Hertzler, Scottdale, Pa.*

Editor's note: *Postage rates for periodicals like* The Mennonite *will increase again on May 11. The average increase for periodicals will be 4 percent.*

Don't judge president's faith

Having just read the book *The Audacity of Hope* by our new president, I was saddened by the words of Willard Epp in his letter "Pray for President Obama" (Readers Say, March 3).

Epp assumed that President Obama did not have a legitimate Christian experience or, as he put it, "He will not 'get it right' until he has the Damascus Road experience." I was saddened because it was typical of so many Christians, including Mennonites, who judge and pronounce people "unsaved" just because they do not believe the gospel in the same way.

Perhaps his was not a "Damascus Road" conversion, but by learning about all other religions and then deciding that what he needed was Christ in his life, this is far more believable than being struck down by lightning. Who are we to judge another person's experience? Who are we to cast the first stone—or the second or third one, and indeed, in the case of our new president, the 60th or 70th one?

Jesus said, "Judge not that ye be not judged." And at a later time, in speaking of those his disciples were calling false teachers, he admonished them by saying, "Don't worry about them; he who is for us is not against us."

Yes, I will pray for our president but not in a condescending manner. I pray in a wholehearted belief that that is what God planned for us at this time.—*Freda Zehr, Wilmington, Del.*

Moratorium

Since April 2000, we have had a moratorium on articles and letters that address Mennonite Church USA's teaching position on sexuality and related membership guidelines that were adopted in 2001. That policy continues. However, we have published and will continue to publish the following:

- news about conference or congregational actions when those disciplinary actions are taken against congregations and/or those with ministerial credentials if such actions are caused by noncompliance with the church's teaching position;
- letters from readers who comment on disciplinary actions taken by conferences or congregations;
- other letters and news that does not violate our moratorium.—*Editor*

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

I have been on a Christian retreat: (47 votes)

○ At least once (64%)

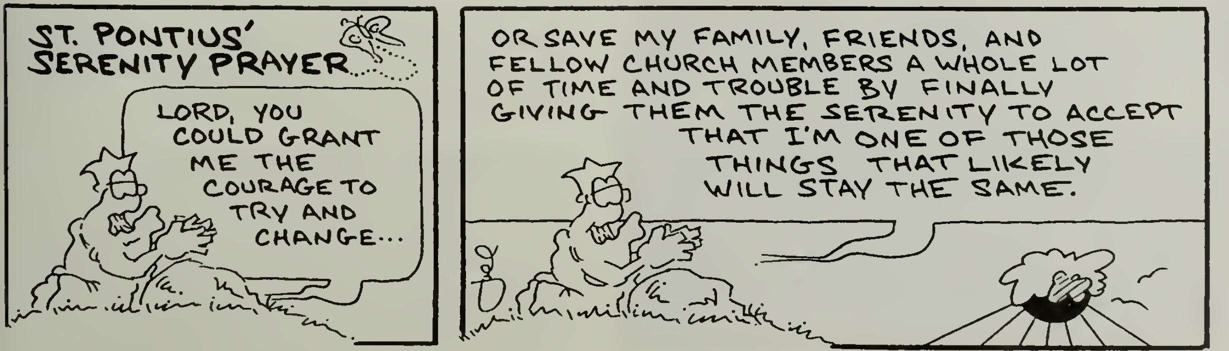
○ In the last year (19%)

○ Never (17%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


ST. PONTIUS' SERENITY PRAYER
LORD, YOU COULD GRANT ME THE COURAGE TO TRY AND CHANGE...
OR SAVE MY FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND FELLOW CHURCH MEMBERS A WHOLE LOT OF TIME AND TROUBLE BY FINALLY GIVING THEM THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT THAT I'M ONE OF THOSE THINGS THAT LIKELY WILL STAY THE SAME.

IN BRIEF

MCC featured in CBS special

"Poverty: A Time for Sharing," an interfaith religion special, will be broadcast April 26 on the CBS Television Network. Check your local station for exact time. It will cite the work of Protestant, Catholic and Mennonite Christians, Jews and Muslims. Mennonite Christians are represented by Arli Klassen, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee and Jim Bowman, former MCC representative in Kenya. Their work across 66 countries stresses service to the poor and nonviolence in all conflicts. Klassen also shows a mobile health clinic in Laos that gives vaccinations and medical attention to mothers and newborns. Bowman describes how building a dam to trap water-retaining sand provides a Kenyan village with drinking water in the dry spell.—*CBS*

Goshen College turns off lights

Goshen (Ind.) College joined 50 million people around the world on March 28, from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m., to raise awareness about global climate change and energy consumption by turning off unnecessary lights during Earth Hour, sponsored by the World Wildlife Fund. WWF recognized Goshen College as a "flagship campus," along with 79 others across the United States. —*Goshen College*

Mennonite pastor presides at mass worship

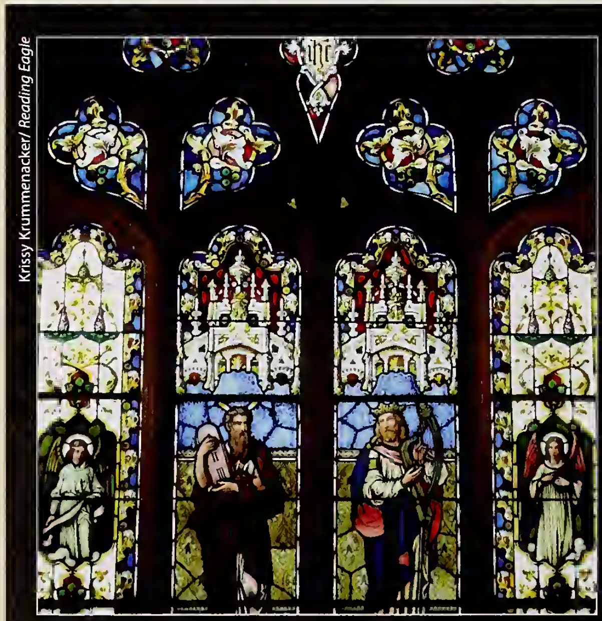
NEWTON, Kan.—Anita Amstutz, pastor of Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church, presided at the closing worship of the March 20-22 conference "The Emerging Church: Conversations, Convergence and Action," sponsored by the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC) in Albuquerque. Almost 1,000 people attended the conference, which included speakers Brian McLaren, Phyllis Tickle and Shane Claiborne. About 25 Mennonites attended.

Fr. Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest and CAC director, asked Amstutz to preside with him, and speak the words of institution/consecration. She said she didn't want him to get in trouble with Catholic authorities, Amstutz writes, "but Richard was very clear that not only a person of the non-Catholic world should preside but that it be a woman. He said, 'Many of our folks have never seen a woman preside and speak the words of institution.' He also said that he didn't see this as a Eucharistic Mass, which would have put it into another category. Thus, as an ecumenical worship service, with the sharing of the bread and cup, he felt it would be just fine."

Rohr gave the homily, and Amstutz said the words of institution.

"I emphasized that this is the Lord's Table; he is the host, not the Catholics or Protestants or Mennonites or Evangelicals," she writes. "Jesus will greet all those who want to come and meet him here, now."

Young women from Catholic and Evangelical traditions came to her afterward and said how meaningful it was for them to have a woman preside, Amstutz says. Some men, including a former priest, also affirmed her leadership.—*Gordon Houser*



Krissy Krummenacker/ Reading Eagle

Book tells of stained glass at Hopewell Mennonite

This stained glass window at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Reading, Pa., features Moses and David. The windows have been memorialized in a new book written by Harry E. Yocom Jr. of Laureldale.—*Reading Eagle*

CPTer faces prison for disarmament action

SWEDEN—A Swedish court on March 16 sentenced two peace activists, one a Christian Peacemaker Team Reservist, to four months in prison for breaking into a Swedish factory last fall and disarming lethal weapons. CPT worker Martin Smedjeback and Anna Andersson entered the Saab Bofors arms factory in Eskilstuna, Sweden, Oct. 16, 2008, and disabled 14 Carl Gustaf bazookas. During the March 9 trial, the judge allowed Andersson and Smedjeback to explain their actions, and they said they had committed the break-in to uphold the Swedish government's ban on supplying arms to warring states. The judge dismissed Saab's claim for some 120,000 Euros in damages. Smedjeback, a nonviolence trainer since 2001, completed CPT training in 2007.—*CPT*

Israeli settlers attack women and children

AT-TUWANI, West Bank—On April 10, five Israeli settlers attacked three Palestinian women while they were grazing their sheep in the Umm Zeituna valley. They beat one of the women, injuring her arm, and chased the women and flocks off the land. Later that morning in the same area, four settlers harassed shepherds from Tuba and Umm Al Kher. The four settlers also harassed two members of Christian Peacemaker Teams, who were passing through Umm Zeituna on their way to Tuba.

On April 5, Israeli soldiers and the Ma'on settlement security guard took three Palestinian boys to the Ma'on settlement and kicked and punched them before allowing them to return home alone. Earlier the same day, settlers shot at a teenage Palestinian shepherd as he grazed his sheep near Juwayya.

On March 25, 20 Israeli settlers left the settlement of Ma'on and shot at Palestinian shepherds grazing their sheep on land belonging to the village of Juwayya.—*Christian Peacemaker Teams*

EMU graduate named to high court

HARRISONBURG, Va.—A 1968 graduate of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., has become the first Latino to be appointed to one of the highest-ranking positions in the judicial system of the state of New York. New York Governor

Lindsey Roeschley

U students care for expanded garden this spring
idi Hershberger works in the garden at Eastern Mennonite iversity, Harrisonburg, Va., as a member of the "Relating to Land" senior seminar class. The garden, expanded from t year, will also provide organic food to the cafeteria.—*EMU*

David A. Paterson named Luis A. Gonzalez of the Bronx, N.Y., to serve as presiding justice of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court for the First Judicial Department, New York City. Justice Gonzalez earned his juris doctor degree from Columbia University School of Law in 1975. He was named EMU's "alumnus of the year" in 1989.—*EMU*

Mennonite author teams up with Mayo Clinic

INTERCOURSE, Pa.—Mayo Clinic, a worldwide authority on health and nutrition, approached Phyllis Pellman Good of Good Books to collaborate on the *Fix-It and Enjoy-It!® Healthy Cookbook.* For the project, Good selected hundreds of recipes created by home cooks nationwide, including many Mennonites, to consider for the cookbook. Mayo Clinic analyzed each recipe for its nutritional value and recommended whether or not it fit within Mayo Clinic's Healthy Weight Pyramid guidelines. Good then adapted and chose the 400 tastiest and most nutritious recipes for the cookbook. It is now available nationwide.—*Good Books*

Friesen, part of India mission legacy, dies

ELKHART, Ind.—John A. Friesen, in the center of a three-generation family legacy of service in India, died on March 20 at the Courtyard Healthcare in Goshen, Ind. He was born in 1915 in Jamgaon, Madhya Pradesh, India. He and his late wife, Genevieve Yoder, served in India with Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities—a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network—from 1939 until 1981, with short periods of time in the United States. Friesen's primary concern was Mennonite church planting in India. —*Mennonite Mission Network*

Bluffton prof to write C. Henry Smith book

BLUFFTON, Ohio—Perry Bush, Bluffton University history professor, was awarded a grant by the C. Henry Smith Trust to assist in the writing of a biography of C. Henry Smith, a distinguished Mennonite historian and noted professor at Bluffton University. No Mennonite scholar has written a book-length manuscript specifically about Smith.

"[He] is overlooked a lot," says Bush. "He had a very different vision of Mennonites in this world. There was a middle ground for him—a selectively negotiated acculturation between Mennonites and a society that was no longer outside the boundaries of their isolated rural worlds. He has a lot to offer us about shifting from 'only rural, German-speaking people' to 'educated, city dwellers' who are still strongly Mennonite." —*Bluffton University*

House for interns opens in Australia

CANBERRA, Australia—More than 50 people offered blessings at the March 22 opening of Irene's Place—a house of discipleship and peace in Canberra, Australia's capital city. Irene's Place is an intentional community for interns from around the world to learn about reconciliation, justice and discipleship while living in community. The name "Irene" comes from the Greek word for peace. Moriah Hurst, Mennonite Mission Network worker, said, "We are starting a place for learning about what it means to be people of peace."—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Anabaptist leader brings challenge at AMBS

ELKHART, Ind.—Stuart Murray Williams, Anabaptist leader in Great Britain, challenged the audience at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, on March 30 to reclaim Anabaptism as a missionary movement in a culture where Christianity is no longer at the center of influence.

"I really believe Anabaptism is a tradition whose time has come for a post-Christendom world," he said. However, he said being missional in this context will "require change at multiple levels: institutional, local, intellectual, strategic, emotional, spiritual and financial."—*AMBS*

—compiled by Anna Groff

IN BRIEF

Swartzentruber next Dock principal

Christopher Dock Mennonite High School's next principal is Conrad Swartzentruber. He will succeed Principal Elaine A. Moyer, who will join the Mennonite Education Agency as associate director at the end of the school year.

For the past 12 years Swartzentruber has served as administrator of Shalom Christian Academy, an Anabaptist pre-K through 12 school serving 540 students in Chambersburg, Pa. Previously, he taught middle school and served in Indonesia and Bangladesh with Mennonite Central Committee for several years.—*Dock*

Scholarship named for EMU student

Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., hopes to build on the legacy of musician and 2008 nursing graduate Matthew Garber through the Matthew Garber Endowed Scholarship Fund. Garber, 22, a well-loved student leader known for his strong faith, drowned in Costa Rica on July 1, 2008, shortly after graduating with honors from EMU. The endowed fund will provide funding for students-in-need who wish to study music or nursing at EMU. —*EMU*

Wrestling

by Anna Maria Johnson

The wrestler of Genesis is truculent, stubborn and a cheater.

The story of Jacob wrestling at Peniel has always puzzled me. In my first Bible, the New International Version I read as a third-grader, the subject heading was "Jacob Wrestles with an Angel." If this stranger is indeed an angel of the Lord, it is not one of the sort pictured on greeting cards or spoken of in sentimental tales of angels in disguise helping people unaware. The wrestler of Genesis is truculent, stubborn and a cheater. "When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him" (v. 25). What a dirty trick!

at Peniel

A reflection on Genesis 32:22-31

I still remember questioning my mother about this story when I was a child. She insisted, despite the translator's subject heading, that it could not have been the angel of the Lord he wrestled, because everywhere else in Scripture the Lord's messenger identifies himself, whereas this wrestler simply asks, "Why is it that you ask my name?" Second, she asked rhetorically, "How could Jacob have defeated the Lord in a wrestling match?"

I did note that the New Revised Standard Version I now read has pared its subject heading to simply, "Jacob Wrestles at Peniel." That image of Jacob wrestling with some sort of divine being has always stuck with me.

Doubt: A few months ago, I was asked to speak in church about a time in my life when I experienced doubt. The words I shared that day were as true as when I first had the experience, but I was also eager to share what happened afterward. The years from 2001 to 2003 had been fraught with pain and difficulty. Several of the people closest to me were hit by everything I most feared—death by cancer, death by suicide, affairs and divorce, sexual assault and, to top it off, I was suffering from severe sleep deprivation (I was a new mother). It seemed that if God were indeed in control, he was clearly not someone to be trusted. I wondered if it would be possible to extricate myself from my religious upbringing and start over with some new ideas. Yet nearly every waking thought was concerned with the existence of God, the supposed love of God, the meaning of life, my childhood faith in Jesus and the commitments to him I had made as an adolescent. I was Jacob, wrestling alone in darkness. And it was unclear to me whether the being I wrestled was an angel or a demon. I could not let go of the struggle.

In 2004, I was invited to attend a Christian contemplative retreat in Oregon. We lived in New York State at the time, and my husband suggested that our whole family fly out together so that he could care for our tiny children while I contemplated. How could I say no to that?

For one week, my fellow retreatants and I spent our mornings in silence, practicing spiritual disciplines, our afternoons sharing stories with each other, and our evenings in Taize-style worship services. During the breaks I nursed my baby. The following weekend a few of us from the retreat went camping together and saw the Giant Redwood Forest in California, 2,000-year-old trees, an experience that helped me understand what the Buddhists mean when they speak of being "shocked into enlightenment" by beauty in nature.

The retreat was compost for my soul. It would be hard to explain what microorganisms were at work, devouring the painful life experiences of the previous years, chewing and reformulating them into something that would eventually be life-giving. Bacteria work in mysterious ways. Retreat does not always feel peaceful. At times it is more like a stalemated wrestling match or like stinking compost. I still felt like Jacob in the wrestling match, but could see the dawn breaking and knew the wrestling would not go on forever. I had a sense of hope that something good could eventually grow out of my hurtful experiences.

Two things were revealed to me that week: the awareness that I did not trust God anymore and that without trust in God I would die.

In choosing to embark on a spiritual retreat, I made a choice against despair and resignation and said, with Jacob, "I will not let go until you bless me."

Trust: I knew I needed to work on trust in an ongoing way. Upon arriving home, I sought out the only spiritual director to be found within a 60-mile radius. When she told me her name was Mary Abraham, I knew she would be just fine. After a year's discernment process, my husband and I both sensed that it would be right to move to Harrisonburg, Va., so that he could take a job as a professor at Eastern Mennonite University and I could pursue seminary coursework and spiritual direction.

Continued on page 10

I can reach my face up to the warm sun, even while I limp along. I have more trusting to do—and probably more wrestling.

Continued from page 9

According to Ronald Rollheiser, a Catholic writer whose work I encountered in one of my seminary classes, our painful life experiences have the power to hurt us but also can bring us a blessing. In choosing to embark on a spiritual retreat, I made a choice against despair and resignation and instead said, as Jacob had said, "I will not let go until you bless me." I reflect on the most difficult segment of my life and see how I was wounded, but with the gift of time I also see that good has grown out of it. There was painful dislocation, but the spiritual wrestling match ultimately resulted in blessing, naming and a clearer sense of vocation.

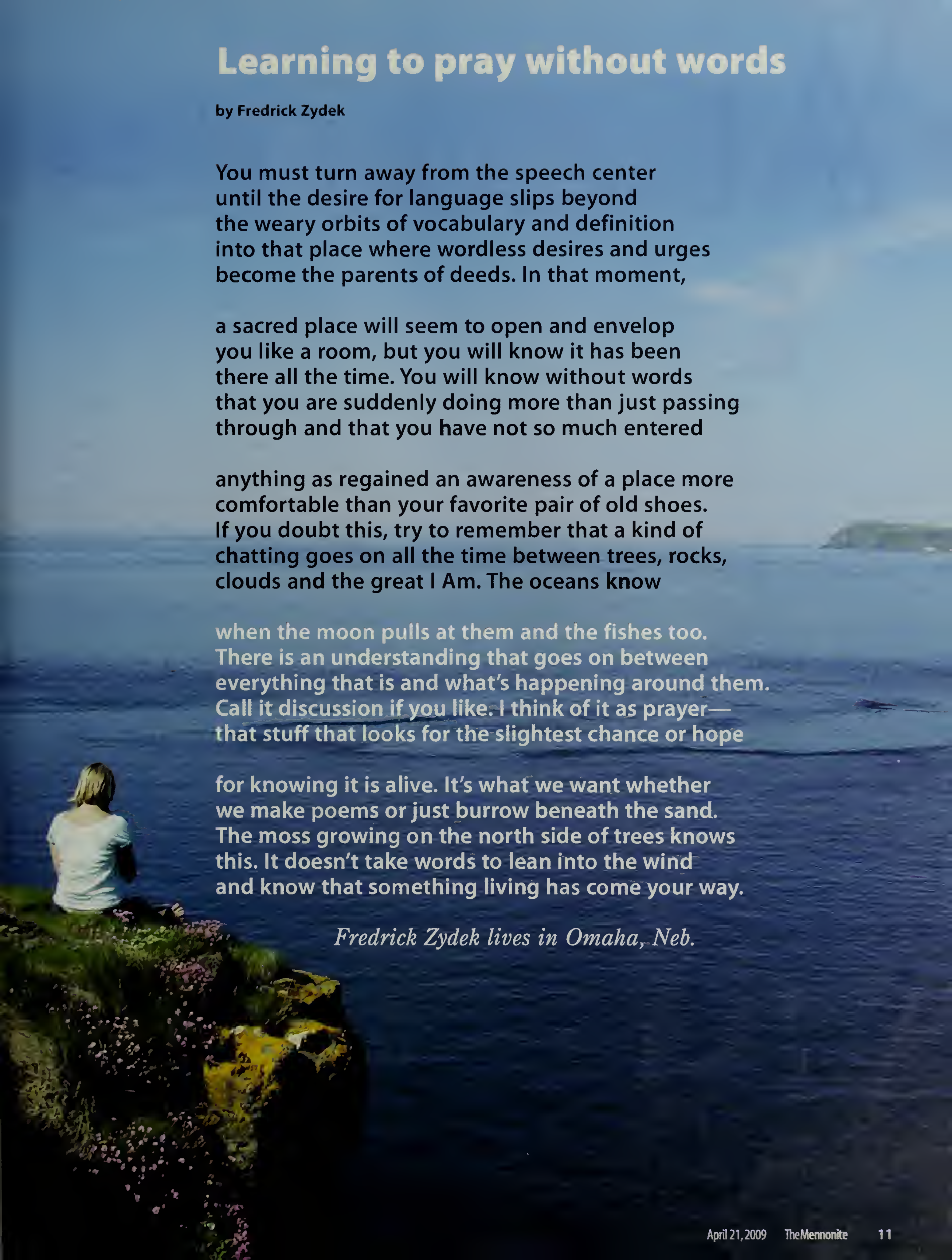
Patience: Since moving to the Harrisonburg area, I have discovered that balancing jobs, studies, family life and other interests has not gone as smoothly as I imagined. Three years later, I have managed to earn only eight credits. But I have found a vibrant spiritual community here at Community Mennonite Church and with some women in our town. Unexpectedly, I have been given opportunities to weave together my undergraduate training as an artist with my spiritual life. Seedlings have sprouted in my soul, thanks to all that compost, and I am curious to see what sort of plants they will grow into. I am learning patience. After all, the Redwood forest did not spring to life in three years.

Last fall my youngest child started kindergarten. This signified the end of seven years' full-time child care and the beginning of something new. I'm thinking of this school year as a sabbatical—or an ongoing spiritual retreat in the midst of daily life—and have some writing and art projects to attend to. Ideas long dormant will have ample room to stretch and grow and be named. I can reach my face up to the warm sun, even while I limp along. I have more trusting to do—and probably more wrestling.

There is rich visual imagery in this passage of the Bible, and it encapsulates what happens in retreat, whether a weekend retreat or an ongoing one:

here is wrestling with a stranger in darkness,
here is wounding and dislocation,
here is naming,
here is tenaciously begging for a blessing,
here is the sun rising,
here is the face of God,
and here am I, limping.

Anna Maria Johnson is a member of Community Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.



Learning to pray without words

by Fredrick Zydek

You must turn away from the speech center
until the desire for language slips beyond
the weary orbits of vocabulary and definition
into that place where wordless desires and urges
become the parents of deeds. In that moment,

a sacred place will seem to open and envelop
you like a room, but you will know it has been
there all the time. You will know without words
that you are suddenly doing more than just passing
through and that you have not so much entered

anything as regained an awareness of a place more
comfortable than your favorite pair of old shoes.
If you doubt this, try to remember that a kind of
chatting goes on all the time between trees, rocks,
clouds and the great I Am. The oceans know

when the moon pulls at them and the fishes too.
There is an understanding that goes on between
everything that is and what's happening around them.
Call it discussion if you like. I think of it as prayer—
that stuff that looks for the slightest chance or hope

for knowing it is alive. It's what we want whether
we make poems or just burrow beneath the sand.
The moss growing on the north side of trees knows
this. It doesn't take words to lean into the wind
and know that something living has come your way.

Fredrick Zydek lives in Omaha, Neb.

At once

by Gordon Houser

Living in the present is at once the easiest and the hardest thing you'll do. And the key is found in those two short words (six letters) "at once."

That, in fact, is where we live, even if we often (most of the time, an interesting expression) do not realize it. "At once" describes a moment and implies a union of disparate elements. Another term we use is "the present"—or "now."

Living there, in the now, is easy because it's where we live—without any required effort. Realizing that is the hard part. "Realizing" has to do with what's real. To realize something is, in a sense, to make it real. But in reality (another interesting term), realizing means becoming aware of something real.

It can also carry the meaning of attainment. We might say, "She realized her potential when she won the race." She attained what had been unrealized. Then it became real. It happened.

How then do we realize (make real) the reality that we live at once, in the present? This leads to another question, Why should we care?

Before we answer these, let's look back at the easy and hard parts of living in the present.

How then do we realize (make real) the reality that we live at once, in the present?

Easy: We exist, we breathe. Those are gifts from our Creator. As gifts, they signify grace. We are alive through no effort of our own. And we breathe usually without thinking about it (asthmatics and others, such as my father in the last several years of his life, dependent on a machine that fed him oxygen, may disagree). We live through each moment by God's grace.

Hard: Receiving that gift of life with gratitude and awareness is not automatic. That takes some effort, what I call practice. Such awareness of the gift of life and breath is more intense (or present) when that gift seems threatened. When our breathing is labored or when our life feels fragile, we may stop and think (or feel): Yes, thank you, God, for life.

The trick (it's not a trick but straightforward) is how to be aware and grateful without requiring extenuating circumstances, such as illness or danger. There is no magic formula. It requires practice.

Better, practices. And there are many. Let me mention a few:

1. Breathing. While this generally occurs routinely, try doing it slowly, rhythmically. For example, sit still and inhale through your nose, letting your diaphragm expand, then exhale through your mouth, letting your diaphragm deflate. This has a calming effect and helps your body relax, but it also helps you be more aware of your breathing, that gift from God, and thus helps you live in the present, and thus in reality.

2. Thanksgiving. A frequent theme in Scripture and the most common form of prayer in the Bible is giving thanks. Take time (another interesting expression) to verbalize your thanks to God for life. Add other gifts as well. David Stendl-Rast's book *Gratefulness: The Heart of Prayer* is a good guide here. You can offer thanks in words, aloud or silent, in song, in gesture or simply. You can combine it with your breathing, thanking God for the miraculous way your body functions, all the many parts that work together in such a way that you are alive. Thanking God for this moment may feel easy when relaxing, say, beside a mountain stream or watching a beautiful sunset. But when in discomfort or pain or in a tense moment when several sources demand your attention, it can feel difficult, to say the least.

3. Slowing down. Such practices require time, which our culture tends to view as a rare commodity. We rush from one activity to another, usually thinking about two or three other activities we'd like to be doing (or rather, getting done). We live in a world of quantification, where prod-

Living in the present requires practice.

uct is valued over process, quantity over quality. To slow down and give our attention to breathing, to giving thanks or to a dozen daily tasks—cooking, washing dishes, brushing our teeth, getting dressed, you name it—is a countercultural exercise. And while Mennonites may take pride in being countercultural, speed is engrained in our psyches. We like to get things done. We are rewarded—paid money, given praise, feel good, that we have a purpose—when we accomplish things. In this way, Mennonites tend to be good Americans—practical, utilitarian.

Slowing down, then, is a requirement for living in the present but also difficult to do. It takes practice, doing it over and over until it becomes almost natural.

My physical therapist has told me about muscle memory. If you do a certain activity 500 times, the muscles used for that activity respond almost automatically when you begin it.

My daughter has run hurdles in high school and college. She had to learn the technique of going over each hurdle as low and as quickly as she could. She got the basic technique down, but to improve on her time she had to keep refining her technique. And she had to keep practicing so that her hurdling became automatic. The more she had to think about it, the worse she performed.

Living in the present, like any spiritual discipline, requires practice. It involves trying and failing, then trying again. It also requires motivation, believing it is worth doing.

Now back to that why question. I could argue that such a practice will make you happier and more serene, and I believe it will. But such a tack reflects American consumerism more than it reflects biblical obedience. And you don't live in the present by thinking how it will help you in the future. Ends-means thinking is antithetical to living in the moment.

I won't argue that such a practice will get you saved or a reward in heaven. But I will invite you to look to Jesus, who lived this practice, aware that he lived and served in the presence of God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit. And though he healed many and taught the crowds and his disciples many truths, his was no assembly-line operation. He didn't even begin his "ministry" until he was around 30 (What kind of productivity is that?), and he often retreated to a deserted place to pray. Finally, in a most un-utilitarian fashion, he gave himself up to his enemies to be killed.

Jesus lived in the reality of God's presence. He participated in the Trinitarian love that is eternal (ever present). As creatures made in God's image, we, too, are made to live in that eternal love. We are directed to love God with our heart, soul, mind and strength—and love our neighbors—not for some future reward but because that is who we are created to be.

Living in the present, like any spiritual discipline, requires practice. It involves trying and failing, then trying again.

Loanne Harms

It's the ultimate realism. Living "at once" is easy and hard. It is following Jesus each moment and receiving forgiveness—over and over—as we fail.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

Prayer char

Three stories of how prayer changed things in an une

by Don Clymer

As I entered the hospital room and introduced myself, I could feel the tension in the air. The woman lying in the bed had lost a child in birth and had requested a visit from a hospital chaplain. I assumed the man standing by her bedside was her husband.

I expressed my sorrow at their loss and tried to be a loving, nonthreatening presence. I hoped to draw out the reason they requested a pastoral visit, but every attempt left me stonewalled. Hoping to salvage some of the visit, I asked if I could pray for them before I left. They agreed. I went over to the woman, laid my hand on her shoulder and prayed a simple prayer. I thought, The shorter the prayer the quicker I will be through this stress-filled ordeal.

As I was about to leave, she grabbed my arm and pulled me closer. "I have something I need to confess."

I prayed they would feel a special sense of God's presence during these difficult times. When I lifted my head, the man was sobbing, his shoulders shaking. He told me a litany of woes he and his wife had gone through the previous three months, culminating with the death of their newborn. The atmosphere in the room changed remarkably after the prayer. The relationship between me and the people changed. What started out as a forced, awkward encounter had become a God moment.

When I was a child a motto hung on our living room wall: "Prayer Changes Things." I think I believed it to be true, but I wasn't all that convinced, at least not until I started visiting people in our local hospital and nursing-care facilities.

The Bible is full of encouragement to pray. Romans 12:12, states: "Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer." Prayer is one of the basic elements of the Christian life. Almost every Christian thinks they could pray more. Beyond encouragement to pray, the Bible also promises that prayer will be answered. 1 John 5:14: "And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." By praying for each other—and understanding that God hears our prayers—we move on to discover that prayer changes things.

My visit with an elderly woman was a pleasant one. We chatted about her life, her accomplishments and her faith. She seemed an optimistic and well-adjusted woman who had learned to live her life gratefully. She consented to a prayer on her behalf. In the prayer I recounted some of the things she had accomplished in her life and thanked God for her faithfulness and commitment.

As I was about to leave, she grabbed my arm and pulled me closer. "I need to talk more to you," she said. "I have something I need to confess." She proceeded to tell me about some unresolved issues in her life that she said "made her more than a little resentful." Her change of attitude took me aback, and we spent a long time talking about things in a totally different way than we had. Prayer brought humility and contrition to an otherwise normal visit. The visit had become a God moment.

Lest you think that these changes only occur with the infirm and the elderly, let me recount an experience with a group of 20 college students in rural Guatemala. We were in the middle of a service project among the Quechi Mayan people. Our living conditions were basic; we slept on boards and had neither electricity nor running water. Bathrooms were makeshift plastic sides with a board over a hole in the ground. After several days of working in the dirt and hot sun, we arrived at the project to find that our directors hadn't arrived and we had to wait until they came with the supplies we needed to keep going. I sensed that the spirits of our group were low. I gathered them in a circle in the local church that served as our project headquarters to hear their complaints.

"We are tired and ready to go home," they said. "We are sick of trying to analyze our every experience." One of the practices our group had to do was journal on where they had experienced God in the previous two weeks, and where they had experienced distractions that took them away from a

ges things

ted way, leading to God moments.

Loanne Harms

sense of God's presence. The distractions were obvious, so I asked them to list where they had experienced God during the past several days of our time in the boonies. The students came up with all sorts of ways they had experienced God: the gorgeous starlit sky where no artificial light was present, the smile of a host child, the smell of the fresh tortillas cooking on the grill, the faithfulness of the people who walked miles and miles in the dark over steep mountain trails to fill the church on a Wednesday night. We prayed and thanked God for showing us his presence in spite of the distractions.

The directors of the project arrived with our materials, and we headed out again to the dirt and sun. There was a noticeable spring in their step as they made their way down the long, narrow mountain path to the field where we were preparing soil for a nursery. As they started to work, several students began singing. Soon the whole group was singing lively African-American spirituals. "As I went down to the river to pray. …" The dirt sieve swung back and forth in rhythm. The local Quechi Mayan people working alongside us caught the spirit, and several of the kids tried to mimic our singing. There were smiles all around.

The prayer of examen completely turned around the atmosphere and tone of the experience. The grime and the sweat had become a God moment.

In their evaluations at the end of the semester, most of the students rated the rural Guatemala experience among the Quechi Mayan people as the best of their semester. The prayer of examen completely turned around the atmosphere and tone of the experience. The grime and the sweat had become a God moment.

I could recount many other experiences of prayer remarkably changing the encounter and the atmosphere of a visit or a group dynamic. God expects us to pray and will answer if it is according to his will. Those answers to our prayers often bring unexpected changes—changes that become God moments—God moments that help build our faith.

Don Clymer teaches Spanish and humanities at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. He also serves on the pastoral care team at Lindale Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, and volunteers as a chaplain to Spanish-speaking patients at Rockingham Memorial Hospital in Harrisonburg.

New life in the
and hope for

The meaning of the afterlife for Christians

by Ann Showalter

In order to address "the afterlife," one must first speak of the meaning of life in the present. The afterlife does not stand alone as if disconnected from prior earthly life. The after is connected to the before, to the everyday life of the Christian in the present. The attitude toward death in our society is relevant as well.

After being in ministry with the dying and the bereaved for over six years, I'm aware that most people in our society are reluctant to speak of death straightforwardly. That's not surprising because we rarely allow death to come close to us. We depend on professionals to care for the dying, and professionals bury the dead. This is primarily true in western, industrialized societies. In most of the world, however, death is as much a part of everyday life as birth.

Most people in our society are reluctant to speak of death straightforwardly.

Our attitudes toward death also affect whether or not we prepare well for our own death. It is a great gift to those left behind if we prepare for the practical end-of-life issues: advance directives for health care, a will and information regarding finances. It is equally important to work toward healing any broken relationships. I emphasize preparation for our death because the meaning of the afterlife for Christians lies at the heart of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The good news is that the ultimate hope for the Christian has already entered this world in the in the birth of Jesus. According to Matthew 1, Jesus came into this world as Emmanuel, "which means God is with us." That is an astounding statement. God broke into this world in a decisively new way in the birth of Jesus. The Source and Sustainer of all creation, the One we call God, came to us as a baby to live and grow as a divine-human person. Jesus came to reveal what God is like, to demonstrate how to live and to offer us new life here and now. When we commit ourselves to be Christians, we are given new life in Christ. Paul writes: "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17-18). To live fully into the meaning of that new life in Christ becomes our life work through the power of the Spirit. The things in this world that are close to the heart of God then become our concerns as well. We are called to love others as God has loved us in Jesus. The First Testament also teaches us to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. Hear the words of the prophet Micah: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Jesus himself did not speak a great deal about the afterlife. In the Matthew 25:31-46 he speaks of the judgment of the nations, but the focus of the passage is on how people had lived here on earth. In John 14, as Jesus prepares his disciples for his own impending death, he says there are many dwelling places in his Father's house. He promises them: "I will come back and take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also" (verse 3). That promise is as much for us today as it was for the disciples. In John 17, Jesus prays passionately for the Father to protect his disciples from "the evil one" after he is no longer present to protect them.

Soon after that prayer, Jesus celebrates the Passover with the disciples, is arrested, tried, condemned, crucified, dies and is buried in a tomb, a huge stone covering the entrance. His followers

present
the future

Lowell Brown

are devastated, their hopes dashed to pieces. However, that is not the end of the story. God raises Jesus to life, never to die again. The resurrection is God's declaration that Jesus is truly his Son and has accomplished everything he came into the world to do. In *Surprised by Hope*, N. T. Wright expresses the centrality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ as "anticipating and guaranteeing the final resurrection of God's people at the end of history."

Paul writes more about the resurrection than any other New Testament writer, especially in Romans 8:18-25 and 1 Corinthians 15. In Romans he writes that "the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (8:21). He continues, "We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies" (8:23). This is the meaning and hope of the afterlife. We Christians will participate in the redemption of our bodies and bodily resurrection through Jesus Christ.

Turn now to 1 Corinthians 15. Some in the church in Corinth did not accept the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul's response was that if Christ has not been raised from the dead, the proclamation of the gospel is in vain and their faith is in vain. He writes: "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (15:19). Paul discusses the resurrection of the body in 15:35-58. He uses a series of images to suggest the nature of our bodies in the present compared with our post-resurrection bodies: Our bodies in the present are "perishable," the resurrected bodies "imperishable." They "bear the image of the man of dust" (that is, Adam), and post-resurrection they "bear the image of the man of heaven" (that is, Jesus). Our bodies now are "physical"; in the future they will be "spiritual." They are "mortal" now and "immortal" after resurrection. Paul is attempting to describe something that is real yet mysterious.

Finally, consider 1 John 3:2: "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he [Jesus] is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is."

Ann Showalter is a retired Mennonite pastor and a member of New Creation Fellowship Church in Newton, Kan.

The resurrection is God's declaration that Jesus is truly his Son and has accomplished everything he came into the world to do.

A step toward greater justice

Keith Harder is director for Health-Care Access for Pastors and Church Workers for Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership.

Over the next six months, Mennonite Church USA congregations will make decisions about their participation in The Corinthian Plan, the new employee benefit plan for pastors and church workers. Our goal is to have 300 congregations signed up by the time we gather for the Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 in Columbus, Ohio, in July. The enrollment period ends Oct. 1.

This is the only opportunity congregations should expect to have to be part of The Corinthian Plan. This is a decision that will affect congregations, pastors and church workers in the future. It deserves careful and prayerful consideration.

Some people ask why we are only focusing on pastors and other church employees. Shouldn't we be addressing the needs of all church members that find themselves without health insurance? They argue that this effort is inconsistent with Anabaptist values by providing special privileges for pastors.

The Corinthian Plan represents an investment in the leadership of our churches.

First, the mandate of Mennonite Church USA delegates was to focus on pastors, especially those who are not insured. Second, The Corinthian Plan represents an investment in the leadership of our churches. If the leadership and ministry potential of a pastor is strengthened by providing health coverage, it strengthens the whole congregation. We have heard congregants who are without insurance say they want their uninsured pastors to have health coverage because they see how this will strengthen the ministry of their pastor and benefit the whole church.

While we are working to provide health coverage for our pastors, we need to find other ways to address the structural and systemic issues in our health-care system and the high cost of health care and health insurance that affects everyone.

Some people wonder if this effort to provide health insurance for our pastors is a diversion from the larger health-care policy issues facing our country. We believe The Corinthian Plan is creating more awareness of these larger issues and is helping us face the harsh realities of health-care costs and the plight of those without adequate health care. The cost-sharing model in The Corinthian Plan invites us to transcend our narrow self-interest, which is what will need to happen on a much broader scale if we are to address our nation's health-care issues.

Some are curious about how current national health-care reform proposals may affect The Corinthian Plan. If reforms actually help reign in the increasing cost of health care, it will be good news for everyone. If reform addresses the needs of the uninsured, we will rejoice. But should we wait for the government to act when there are ways we can respond to the specific needs of pastors in our church? Who knows when the government may act and what it may do. In the meantime, many of our pastors are vulnerable, and their ministry is compromised by the lack of health coverage.

The Corinthian Plan is a step toward greater justice, toward healthier pastoral leadership and toward a stronger and more vibrant Mennonite Church USA. It represents an opportunity to forge a new relationship of mutual support among pastors, congregations, conferences and churchwide agencies by together providing health care for pastors and other church workers, including those who serve the church through area conferences and agencies.

In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul challenges the Corinthians to fulfill their pledge to help the church in Jerusalem. Soon we will find out if we were able to fulfill the pledge we made in San José to assist pastors in Mennonite Church USA with limited access to health care.

Much is still needed to bring The Corinthian Plan to reality. Some have said that it will take a miracle to reach the goal of 80 percent of Mennonite Church USA congregations participating in the plan. Join us in praying and working for this miracle.

"You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but overflows with many thanksgivings to God" (2 Corinthians 9:11).

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **The business of church**—Ernest J. Hershberger
- **The years ahead**—C. Norman Kraus

CLC proposes new Leaders Forum event

The first mini-assembly for all MC USA church leaders could happen in 2010.

Constituency Leaders Council affirmed a new Leaders Forum event for church leaders to meet regularly as a mini-assembly for about one week every two years on the off-convention year. The first gathering could happen in 2010. CLC met March 30-April 1 at the Amigo Centre in Sturgis, Mich.

Keith Weaver, Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference moderator and member of the role of the conferences in the denomination task force, said the intention is to "get all the players in the same room to have some shared conversation."

The proposal called for all leaders in the Mennonite Church USA system to attend (see sidebar for list). CLC members raised the following concerns: the environmental impact, that participants with resources may dominate the attendance, and a perpetuation of meeting fatigue for leaders. Members also questioned if this truly answers the ongoing question for CLC: What is the role of conferences?

After feedback from CLC, the task force came back with these considerations:

- The exact date can be set later, but the meetings should take place on college, seminary and high school campuses on a rotating basis.
- The forum should at least minimize redundancy in our current system.
- CLC would refocus its role as a "board of elders."
- The forum should prioritize "Holy Spirit-led renewal."

With implementation of the forum, the number of CLC meetings would be reduced by at least 25 percent in each biennium. The task force also plans to propose to the Executive Board placing churchwide conventions on a three-year cycle, while acknowledging the logistical complexities.

On the final day, CLC affirmed the task force moving forward with the forum proposal while making some revisions and working with the Executive Leadership and Executive Board.

Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg, a pastor at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio, said she saw a strength of the forum as offering a place for youth and young adult ministry leaders to gather and contribute. Currently church leadership loses out on input from this interest group, she said.

Silent white male experiment: CLC put into practice the "silent white male" experiment adopted at last fall's meeting in Albuquerque, N.M. In each session, seven white men volunteered to serve as silent partners so that 20 percent of the active group would be underrepresented racial/ethnic people.

"The spirit was less anxious than I predicted," said Iris de León-Hartshorn, member of the CLC antiracism task force, after the majority of the sessions. "It was good to see people volunteer and participate."

She said the task force will consider other methods for future meetings, such as the talking circle, in which participants pass a stick while speaking. Justin Heinzekehr of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference volunteered as a "silent partner."

Heinzekehr said he perceived the exercise as more useful to the white men at his table than necessarily encouraging racial/ethnic people to contribute more.

The spirit was less anxious than I predicted. It was good to see people volunteer and participate.—Iris de León-Hartshorn

"This gave people an authentic way of experiencing exclusivity," he said. "[The exercise] is a valuable first step."

Heinzekehr said he understood the purpose of the exercise and drew a parallel to his feelings as a young adult. In meetings, he said, he observed factors that bar young adults and other minorities from participating: knowledge of the church structure, communication style differences and a lack of understanding of the generational cultures.

Jacob Castro of Western District Conference told the CLC that the lack of time for introductions and relationships inhibited the table group discussions. He said he found it difficult to process weighty issues, such as racism, with unfamiliar people.

In other news: CLC reviewed a document, "Strategic Planning for Mennonite Church USA," from the churchwide agency executives. The three main goals are to revitalize our traditional churches, nurture the growing edges of our churches and make connections with others who share our beliefs and values.

Dick Thomas, moderator of Atlantic Coast Mennonite Conference, reported from the executive director search committee. He said that the names of 70 candidates had been submitted. The committee's goal is to make the announcement of their selection at the Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 in July, if possible.

The next CLC meeting will be Oct. 19-21, 2009, at the Williamsburg (Va.) Christian Retreat Center. —*Anna Groff*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

Leaders Forum: Who would go?

- Conference moderators, ministers, leadership groups, and key staff
- Executive Board members
- Executive Leadership staff
- Constituency group board members and staff
- Churchwide agency board members
- Key agency staff and more

Mennonite churches discern if and how to minister to convicted sex offenders

Dreamstime.com | Illustration Dee Birkey

An indivudual who is a convicted sex offender asks to worship at your church. How can a church faithfully minister to both convicted sex offenders and to victims of abuse in the congregation?

Congregations have faced this challenge.

For people who are sex offenders "there is really nowhere to go," says Beverly Miller, who experienced this issue firsthand in her former church, a Mennonite Church USA congregation.

"They are rejected everywhere they go, even in prison," she says. "It seems like the church could be the perfect place for individuals convicted of sexual offenses to begin their transition into the community and to be held accountable for their actions yet also to speak to the fears of victims in the church community."

Why can churches offer a unique space to offenders and victims?

"We have more to add than a strict legal perspective or a strict social work perspective," says Dorothy Nickel Friesen, Western District Conference (WDC) minister. "We have the whole person in mind and the whole congregation in mind. That's what makes it so complicated."

Friesen also describes offenders in churches as a "highly reactive issue."

"The naïveté and the thought that 'this wouldn't happen in a Mennonite church' are deplorable and regrettable," she says.

In fact, churches are unaware of the high number of unknown (and not convicted) sexual offenders sitting in their pews, says Paul Unruh, a clinical social worker.

"Usually a congregation is at a greater risk from the unknown offenders than the known offenders," Unruh says. "All congregations have an offender, whether known or unknown."

Congregations faced with "known offenders" who want to attend have spent years discerning how to, or how not to, be in fellowship with these individuals.

After consulting Mennonite Central Committee Canada's "The Green Manual" and from firsthand experiences in her former congregation, Miller suggests four general steps for congregations ministering to sex offenders:

- First, the church must decide whether or not they are called to this ministry, she says.
- Second, the church forms an accountability group—a "circle of support" with the offender. The manual recommends that the circle of support include men and women as well as a sexual victim representative.

"The 'circle of support,' as outlined by the manual," Miller says, "is designed to encourage mutual sharing and accountability. At the center of the circle is the ex-offender, who is involved from the beginning and included in all decision-making."

Miller recommends that other churches facing this issue should involve the offender in the process as quickly as possible.

"Don't let it get to the point that you're having so much discussion about it that you start forming divided groups in the congregation," she says.

- Third, if discerned by the "circle of support," the offender may attend church services after signing a covenant with the congregation to ensure safety of the children. The covenant addresses specifics such as which doors the offender will use to enter and exit the church and what church activities the offender may attend.
- Fourth, to encourage transparency, it is suggested that everyone working with children and youth has a criminal background and sexual abuse check on file at the church.

Marlene Bogard, minister of Christian nurture and resource library director for WDC, is trained to lead in "safe sanctuary" trainings, which provide information on abuse prevention and education on sexual abuse for church leaders, staff and volunteers.

Bogard says churches must realize they are vulnerable to pedophiles and wanderers (people who are curious and have sexual longings toward children).

Pastors, social workers, church leaders and more share their perspectives. All agree it is a long, painful process for victims, offenders and members.

Good prevention policies, including background checks and screenings, in churches also reduces the likelihood of an accusation, which "can do nearly as much damage to a leader and the congregation as actual misconduct," she says.

For some congregations, the prevention and education piece is the "silver lining" in this overwhelming issue. Cleo Koop, pastor of First Mennonite Church, Halstead, Kan., says that by facing a sex offender, his congregation became more aware of the reality and pain of abuse.

"We are much healthier in that regard," he says.

However, Koop admits that it is not a process without incredible pain. At First Mennonite, the convicted man has attended regularly for about six years, but not without creating conflict and consequences. In fact, 15 percent of the congregation left over the issue or related issues, says Koop.

"It's been a long, arduous past," says Koop.

Koop says if you asked the members of First Mennonite, some would ask, Why is he still here? and others would say he is forgiven—along with responses on the continuum.

And for many of the sexual victims in the congregation, the offender serves as a reminder of their pain.

"Don't let this be the only thing that consumes [your congregation]," Koop says. "You never get done resolving it."

Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan., encountered a man who was released from prison with multiple accounts of child sexual abuse and wanted to attend. This man no longer attends or lives in the area.

Through the process, Eric Massanari, Shalom's pastor, says members made comments such as, "The church I joined would never welcome a known risk," or, "The church I joined would never send this man packing."

"Some of our idealized images of church needed to die and be reborn," Massanari says. "Somehow God would need to help us reframe our image of who we were as a congregation."

Massanari said hiring someone trained in conflict resolution to facilitate Shalom's discernment process was one of the best decisions made. He says major theological questions emerged: Is the church called to offer sanctuary to the most vulnerable? Or are we called to welcome all people? Can the church always do both? "A single congregation can't be all things to all people," he says.

So what are the options for churches who want to address this issue? Unruh offers one way to address the issue: a "house church model."

While not a perfect solution, these house churches could be composed of people aware of the issues and would not endanger children and youth, he says.

"Until we open ourselves to consider an offender 'one of our own,' as we have started to do with victims," he says, "this problem will only perpetuate."

Unruh describes sexual offending as a "secrecy disorder," since the overwhelming majority of offenses occur with no one observing but the victim and offender. A "cure" for such secrecy is, of course, disclosure.

But the catch is, Unruh says, the person who has offended should not become more isolated after the offense is made public—which may often be the case. When the offense becomes public, the offender often becomes even more isolated from healthy relationships than he or she was before.

Until we open ourselves to consider an offender 'one of our own,' as we have started to do with victims, this problem will only perpetuate.—Paul Unruh

"I believe in confession, repentance, forgiveness," he says. "I do not believe in confusing those three with lack of accountability. ... True forgiveness does not mean that things go back to the way they were.

"A person who has repented and been forgiven," he says, "should still be held appropriately accountable to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle in the present."—*Anna Groff*

Editor's note: *A sex offender is an individual convicted of a sex crime. The examples in this article are sexual offenders who have committed child sexual abuse.*

Resources for churches on sexual abuse:

"Broken Boundaries: Resources for Pastoring People" from the MCC Domestic Violence Task Force

Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches by Carolyn Holderread Heggen (Herald Press,1993)

"The Green Manual (MCC Pilot Project)" by Dave Worth, et. al. (MCC Canada, 2001)

What would your congregation do?

Member of Ambler Mennonite shares the church's walk with a sex offender.

In 2002, Joe* visited our church, Ambler (Pa.) Mennonite Church. Then Joe's probation officer alerted our interim pastor that Joe was a convicted child sex offender under court supervision. Joe attended our Sunday morning service a second time while church leaders met to consider the implications of Joe's attendance, and later a congregational meeting was held.

Leadership believed that with discussion and close supervision, Joe could safely worship with us. However, some in our church reacted strongly to Joe attending our worship service—concerned that in a small church with children visible and up front—boundaries could easily be crossed.

Joe was asked to not attend the Sunday morning service to give us some time to process. Leadership had learned that one of Joe's previous offenses occurred with children in his home church setting and that one of his previous victims had attended our church as a young person and that this person's parents were current members. Fear increased as this new information came to light. What would your church do?

> A Christian sexual trauma expert advised us to go as slow as the slowest person. —Scott Eldredge

We formed an off-site Sunday school class for Joe to prevent contact with children and offer Joe a small support group. Additional congregational meetings were held. People meeting with Joe began to believe passionately that the gospel compels us to accept Joe fully—specifically at the Sunday morning worship service.

A new concern emerged as several adult members disclosed their sexual abuse histories. In some cases the church where the abuse occurred had played a harmful role at the time of their childhood abuse. Some felt that worshiping with Joe would set back their progress and stimulate painful abuse memories. This was confirmed by an outside resource person, Diane Langberg, a Christian sexual trauma expert and therapist who advised us to go as slow as the slowest person by allowing each person time in their processing and healing.

A sexual abuse task group formed, and people from all perspectives were represented. Some good things happened: Some survivors met with Joe to hear his story, both as a child victim of sexual abuse and later as a perpetrator. Some concerned parents and grandparents met with Joe.

We created a monthly Sunday evening service for adults to help incorporate Joe and lessen the isolation of those ministering to Joe. As Joe's probation ended, an accountability group formed, modeled after the Mennonite Central Committee Canada resource. Joe never really engaged with this group and stopped attending the meetings.

Some left our church as we all tired of the long process, and some felt concerned for their young children. Others left for other reasons, including a life transition and our failure to welcome Joe into our Sunday morning service.

I believe Joe could have been incorporated safely into our Sunday morning worship. However, I was not ready to force this on those struggling to heal from their own sexual abuse experiences. I agree with our outside resource person's advice to "go slow."

Joe expressed his desire not to attend Sunday morning worship until all felt ready. We were the church to Joe in a powerful way, but I am sorry that some set up Joe's attendance at our Sunday morning worship as the litmus test for judging our faithfulness. I understand their perspective, I just feel that this was an unfortunate and false line to draw.

In December 2007, Joe decided to discontinue attending the groups and evening worship. Coming off probation, I believe, gave Joe a new sense of freedom to move past this chapter.

This year another survivor, initially opposed to Joe's attendance, expressed her readiness for Joe to attend our worship service. I see God at work as others continue to heal. Healing may not mean for everyone an acceptance of Joe in our worship service, but I trust God for his work of healing individually and among us. I know some still hurt from this experience in our church, and we all mourn for those who have left.

We did not find any easy answers. What would your church do?—*Scott Eldredge*

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*Joe is a pseudonym. For the full-length version of this article, go to www.themennonite.org.

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What to expect of millennial pastors

They are 'positively shaped by both pluralism and standards of conduct.'

The millennial generation has begun attending seminary. In *Millennials Rising*, authors Neil Howe and William Strauss observe young people born between 1982 and 2001 are positively shaped by both pluralism and strict standards of conduct. Millennials are realistically optimistic; they appreciate rules and institutions in general, value relationships with adults, work collaboratively and long for community. How might millennial pastors think and behave differently?

Call and pastoral identity: Many young adults entering seminary have experienced an "outer call" from people who have affirmed their gifts for ministry but may be searching for an "inner call" and confidence in this vocation toward which God is leading. Until both the outer and inner calls are in place, millennial pastors may feel they are just "playing" the role.

Mentoring and collaboration: Millennials have been tended closely by adults in their early lives and into their university years. Because vocational discernment now often extends into their late 20s and 30s, these mentoring relationships remain significant over a longer period of time.

Authority: Millennials are less likely than their predecessors to challenge authority, unless it is misused. They value the office of pastor and want it to have integrity. They are also more willing to embrace their own authority, but they hold it humbly and tentatively, not assuming theirs is the only perspective. Younger pastors will attempt to draw in the voices and gifts of many.

Truth and Scripture: The stereotype that young people scorn truth and ignore Scripture is also inaccurate; they do, however, redefine them. "Truth" is not an abstract principle but something that is lived humbly and consistently. Scripture is authoritative not as a collection of principles and promises but as a compelling and integrative alternative vision for living in relation to the Creator, creation and other humans.

Intimacy, singleness and sexuality: Intimacy, singleness and sexuality are important issues for millennials. Young pastors are more likely to be single. Finding a place in family-oriented church life can be awkward, as can finding a spouse when wed to the church. Millennials have a robust understanding of intimacy, which cannot be reduced to sexuality. They value relationships marked by caring and openness with both genders.

Inclusion and accountability: Today's young adults value and expect diversity. Inclusion of marginalized people is a justice issue for them. But millennials also value accountability within the community and want to talk about lifestyle choices from a faith perspective. They seek conversation, not condemnation.

How might the church help millennial pastors flourish?

- Affirm both the specific gifts and personal qualities they bring to effective ministry.
- Ensure mentors to help clarify callings.
- Develop collaborative team ministries.
- Listen humbly when millennials question tradition, understanding they want to strengthen it.
- Promote mutual encouragement and accountability.
- Read the Bible in community and live God's justice and mercy out in everyday life.
- Engage in authentic dialogue.
- Empower single young adult pastors to protect personal social time.
- Expand intimacy to include spiritual, emotional and intellectual communion.

—Andrew Brubacher Kaethler and Janeen Bertsche Johnson, reprinted by permission from Canadian Mennonite

How many millennials?
Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary has 45 millennial students this year. Eastern Mennonite Seminary has 32 millennial students this year.

For the full-length version of this article, go to www.themennonite.org

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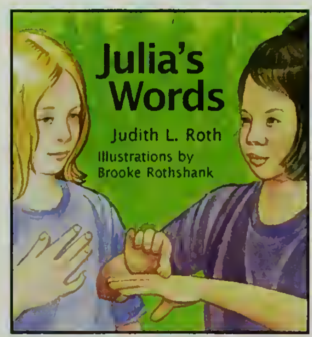

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Bethel to reduce budget by $1 million

Phased-in elimination of five faculty positions for the 2010-11 school year.

Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. faces significant financial difficulties caused by revenue decreases and stock market drops.

In their spring meetings April 2-4, the Bethel board approved strategies over the next two years to address budget challenges. These strategies involve increased revenue through modest tuition increases and expense reductions in departmental budgets.

President Barry C. Bartel says, "Both the board and our accrediting body [the Higher Learning Commission] made it clear in recent months that we cannot continue to operate with deficit budgets, as we have done for many years. We must develop an operating model that is sustainable at current enrollments and then anticipate increased revenue and increased opportunity with growth and higher enrollments."

> **Our sense is that it is more critical to support and endow the core of Bethel that responds to more students' interests.**
> —Barry Bartel

Bethel's economic situation requires reducing the budget by nearly $1 million over the next year. For 2009-10, this will include not filling a number of staff and administrative positions that have come open this year and streamlining staffing in several areas.

Another action taken will decrease the number of courses taught, intended as a move toward efficient programming through reductions where there is limited student demand. This action means that the 2010-11 school year will see the phased-in elimination of five faculty positions and phased-in reduction to half-time of two faculty positions. [*Editor's note: Bethel declined to name these positions.*]

"These actions do not diminish the value or importance of those academic areas or the strength of the faculty," says Bartel, "but recognize the lack of demand for certain programs nationally and on our campus. Our curriculum must respond to what students are interested in studying.

"We recognize that the programs and the individuals affected by these decisions have committed much to Bethel," he says. "As administration and board, our commitment and passion ultimately required us to act in the interest of the institution. We urge others to seek that understanding as well."

Current juniors and seniors within the affected areas of study will be advised during the coming weeks in order to ensure they are able to complete their major.

Individual advisors will work with all students to help students achieve their educational goals at Bethel College, Bartel says.

"We are in an era when short-term solutions to difficult issues will not be sufficient," he says. "Our sense is that it is more critical to support and endow the core of Bethel that responds to more students' interests."

The Bethel board also reviewed the work of administration in concert with faculty and staff leaders over the past two months to develop an operating model that can be sustained at varying enrollment levels. The proposed operating model would be built on larger groupings of faculty to allow for more interdependence between disciplines.

"We confront this challenge confident in our foundation in Jesus Christ," Bartel says, "in the college seal and passionate about our mission as a diverse community of learners committed to the search for authentic faith and empirical understanding, providing rigorous instruction in the liberal arts and selected career and professional areas and providing intellectual, cultural and spiritual leaders for church and society.

"We confront this challenge thankful for the prayerful and financial support of so many whose lives have been shaped by their experiences here and mindful of the knowledge that God calls on us to shape Bethel as a stronger, even more vibrant, thriving educational institution," Bartel says.

—Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College

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Mission Network must reduce spending

5- to 10-percent decreases in staff hours will help lower costs by $500,000

A struggling economy offered both validation and challenge for Mennonite Mission Network in the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

The validation: consistent support from constituents in a difficult economic climate. The challenge: The agency must reduce spending by more than $1 million over the next two years.

According to preliminary, unaudited figures, overall annual fund giving to Mennonite Mission Network in the 2008-2009 fiscal year that ended Jan. 31 was nearly level, despite the weakening economy—$6.304 million in 2008-2009 compared with $6.321 million the previous year. More than 60 percent of Mennonite Mission Network's income is from annual fund contributions.

As economic difficulties grew last year, Mission Network again focused on expenses, spending more than $480,000 less than budgeted. Total annual fund spending for 2008-2009 was about $10.1 million. Other unaudited figures showed that total congregational giving decreased 2 percent from the previous year, to $4.18 million from $4.25 million, while total individual giving increased 4 percent to $2.12 million from $2.04 million.

Individual donors gave $1 million for the "Joining Together, Investing in Hope" campaign to build a Mennonite Church USA office building. Campaign leaders believe the campaign's third year will include commitments to enable the construction to begin in the spring of 2010.

Rising global expenses increase ministry costs each year. To pay for its current ministries, Mission Network historically has needed 4 to 5 percent contribution increases annually, according to Peter Graber, director of development. Graber noted that while giving from congregations has not kept pace with rising expenses over the last five years, individual giving has increased steadily.

Mission Network leaders have a two-year goal of reducing annual spending to around $9 million. Already Mission Network has announced temporary cost-saving measures, including 5- to 10-percent decreases in hours for all staff members and one-time decreases in travel, operating expenses and some staff benefits, which will lower costs by about $500,000. Leaders expect to announce permanent strategic budget changes in the next several months.—*Mennonite Mission Network staff*

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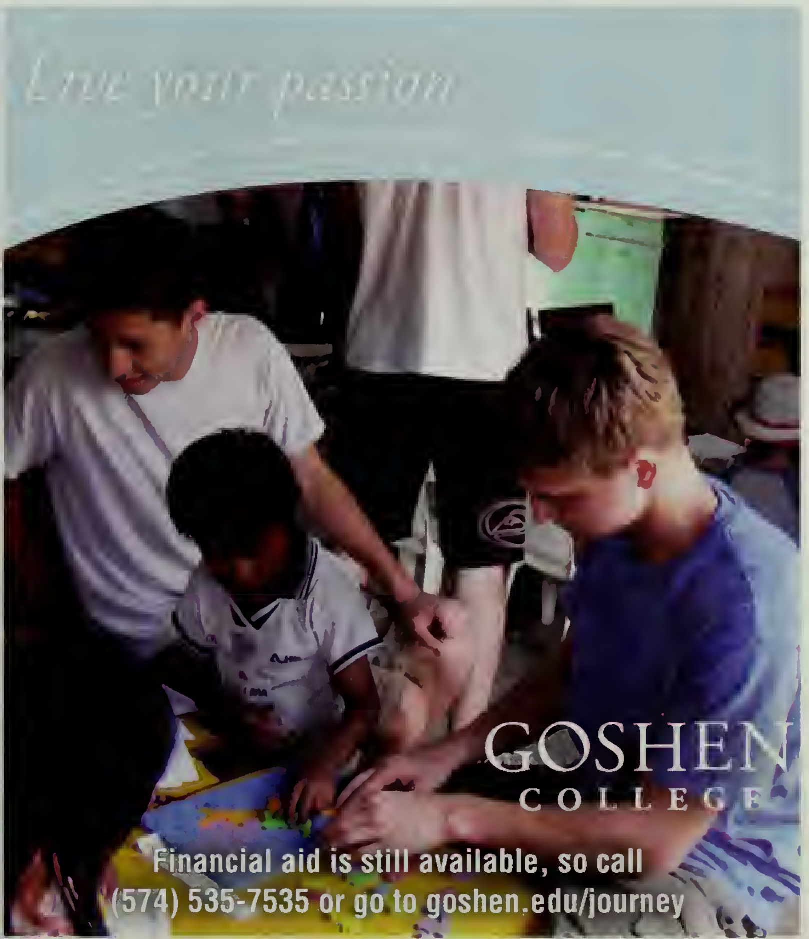
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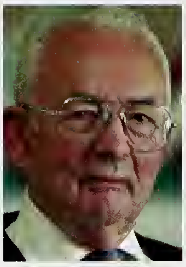
Integration pioneer dies Easter evening

Erland Waltner, 94, was instrumental in helping two denominations merge.



Erland Waltner

Erland Waltner, president emeritus of Mennonite Biblical Seminary, died late Easter Sunday, April 12, in Goshen, Ind. He was 94 years old. Waltner served the seminary and the church in many roles over a long lifetime of ministry, not only with Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., but also with Mennonite World Conference (MWC), the General Conference Mennonite Church (GCMC), Mennonite Health Association and Mennonite Medical Association.

Waltner's most significant contribution was his leadership in bringing together Mennonite Biblical Seminary, the General Conference seminary in Chicago, and Goshen Biblical Seminary (GBS), a seminary of the former Mennonite Church (MC) in Goshen, Ind. Over a span of several years, he negotiated the possibility of an association between the two seminaries with Harold S. Bender, dean of GBS, and with others. Then as president of MBS beginning in 1958, when it relocated to Elkhart, he helped guide the cooperative program to maturity. He retired as president in 1978 but continued to teach at AMBS until the 1990s and to provide spiritual direction to students until shortly before his death.

Waltner's ministry began in 1935, when he served as summer pastor of the Wisner (Neb.) Mennonite Church. From 1938 to 1949, he served as pastor of Second Mennonite Church, Philadelphia, and then Bethel Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, Minn. In 1949, he responded to a call to join the faculty of Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., where he taught Bible and religion for eight years.

When Waltner joined the board of MBS in 1948, he already had a strong friendship with Bender, growing out of contact with Bender during graduate study and during trips they made for Mennonite Central Committee to Europe. In addition, Waltner had made visits to Civilian Public Service camps, another venue of inter-Mennonite cooperation. Then in the summer of 1954, when GBS and MBS held their first joint classes, Waltner was one of the instructors. All these experiences were influential in his vision for greater inter-Mennonite association.

In addition to Waltner's service with AMBS, he also served the church in other significant ways. He was president of the General Conference Mennonite Church from 1956 to 1962 in addition to being a member of the GCMC Board of Education and Board of Missions. He served as a member of the presidium of MWC (1957-1963) and then president of MWC for 10 years (1963-1973). Later in his life he became involved with health organizations, serving as a member of the board of Mennonite Health Association and one year as president (1983-1984) and as executive secretary of Mennonite Medical Association for 13 years (1979-1992).

"No one did more than Erland Waltner to bring together the two largest Mennonite denominations in North America," says Nelson Kraybill, current president of AMBS, "and inspire us to work together for God's mission in the world. With theology deeply grounded in the death and resurrection of Jesus, Erland was a formative presence in the development of AMBS."

Waltner was born July 7, 1914, to Ben J. and Emma P. Waltner of Hurley, S.D. Waltner attended Freeman (S.D.) Junior College and Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. He earned an S.T.B. from Biblical Seminary in New York in 1938, and from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia he earned a Th.M. in 1940 and a Th.D. in 1948.—*Mary E. Klassen for Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary*

Note: The full version of this release is available at www.themennonite.org

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CALENDAR

The **Orrville Mennonite Church, Orrville, Ohio,** is having its ***centennial celebration*** June 27-28. Friends of the church or anyone who has attended Orrville Mennonite during the last 100 years is most welcome.

Friendship Community will host their ***9th annual Golf Classic*** on Thursday, Sept. 3 at Lebanon Valley Golf Course, 240 Golf Road, Myerstown. For more information or ways to participate, check out www.friendshipcommunity.net. To register, call Betty Hess at 717-656-2466 ext. 165 or Email bhess@friendshipcommunity.net.

The annual ***Black Swamp Benefit Bazaar*** will be held at the **Fulton County (Ohio) Fairgrounds** on June 19 and 20 to benefit Sunshine Inc. of Northwest Ohio and international disaster relief efforts through MCC. To order the Black Swamp promotional DVD call 419-335-2763, ext. 10. Visit www.blackswampbenefit.org for more information.

WORKERS

Bowman, Randall L., associate pastor at Lichty Mennonite Church, Terre Hill, Pa., transferred to Keystone Mennonite Fellowship Feb. 13.

Bowman, Mary Jo, was licensed toward ordination by action of the Church of Life Commission on Feb. 5. She attends Harland Mennonite Church, Harlan, Ky.

Eshleman, J. David, moved from overseer of the Washington-Baltimore District of Lancaster Conference to church consultant work with Lancaster (Pa.) Conference.

Forrey, K. Eugene, ended a term as interm pastor at Lost Creek Mennonite Church, Mifflintown, Pa., on Feb. 1.

Funk, Matthew W., was licensed as associate pastor at Buffalo Mennonite Church, Lewisburg, Pa., Jan. 11.

Groff, J. Wesley, resigned from lead pastor role at Susquehanna Mennonite Church, Port Trevorton, Pa., Dec. 31, 2008.

Horning, Kenneth, was installed as intentional interim at Alcase Christian Fellowship, Temple, Pa., Dec. 1, 2008.

Horst, Aaron Z., deacon at Lichty Mennonite Church, Terre Hill, Pa., transferred to Keystone Mennonite Fellowship Feb. 13.

Hostetter, Dale R., was licensed as minister of pastoral care at Old Road Mennonite Church, Gap, Pa., Feb. 15.

Hostetter, J. Michael, was licensed for mission work in Chile from Old Road Mennonite Church, Gap, Pa., Dec. 14, 2008.

Long, Clair R., lead pastor at Lichty Mennonite Church, Terre Hill, Pa., transferred to Keystone Mennonite Fellowship Feb. 13.

Mininger, Richard H., credential moved to active without charge Feb. 15 at the closing of Halifax Community Fellowship where he served as lead pastor.

Moore, Kenneth E., was licensed as lead pastor at Benders Mennonite Church, Pen Argyl, Pa., Dec. 14, 2008.

Riegsecker, Marilyn, ended a term as pastor at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on March 1.

Rintelman, Dale D., was licensed as lead pastor at Agape Fellowship, Williamsport, Pa., Jan. 18.

Sauder, Eugene H., retired deacon at Lichty Mennonite Church, Terre Hill, Pa., transferred to Keystone Mennonite Fellowship Feb. 13.

Sensenig, Peter M., was ordained as a minister of the gospel from Oxford Circle Mennonite Church, Philadelphia, Pa., Dec. 13, 2008.

Stoltzfus, Sherman, was installed as lead pastor at Lost Creek Mennonite Church, Mifflintown, Pa., March 1.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Beachy, Samuel Diener, March 23, to Ben and Sarah Diener Beachy, Harrisonburg, Va.

Berry, Audra Grace, March 9, to Paul and Alicia Slaubaugh Berry, Harrisonburg, Va.

Bixler, Susannah Rosa, March 20, to Benjamin and Sarah Gehman Bixler, Harrisonburg, Va.

Fairfield, Grace Elizabeth, Dec. 11, 2008, to Joshua and Christine Glick Fairfield, Staunton, Va.

Hershberger, Olivia Fern, March 7, to Barry and Tanya Dugley Hershberger, Canton, Ohio.

O'Shaughnessy, Leighton Helene, March 22, to Ryan and Griffen Bishop O'Shaughnessy, Denver, Colo.

Schrock, Camden Everett, Jan. 23, to Brent and Andrea Miller Schrock, Hartville, Ohio.

Shuman, Harper Claire, Feb. 6, to Steve and Kellie Troyer Shuman, Uniontown, Ohio.

Trotter, Martin Isaac Shew, March 25, to Travis and Gini Shew Trotter, Harrisonburg, Va.

Wenger, Abram Andrew, April 1, to Darrell and Hannah Kratzer Wenger, Harrisonburg, Va.

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

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DEATHS

Beck, Garold Dean, 70, Archbold, Ohio, died March 23. Spouse: Neva Miller Beck. Parents: Dale E. and Meredith Beck. Children: Tom, Ann King, Linda Klopfenstein, foster son Rudy Saldivar; 17 grandchildren. Funeral: March 26 at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Bixler, Susannah Rose, 6 days, Harrisonburg, Va., died March 26 following premature birth. Parents: Benjamin and Sarah Gehman Bixler. Siblings: Calvin. Funeral: March 29 at Zion Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va.

Ferguson, Paul R., 72, Wooster, Ohio, died March 27. Spouse: Judith E. Hostetler Ferguson. Parents: Paul V. and Russelle Stone Ferguson. Children: Deborah Johnson, Paul W., Susan Waybill, Timothy E.; 10 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: March 30 at McIntire, Davis and Greene Funeral Home, Wooster.

Huntsberger, Ruth A. Wenger, 95, Orrville, Ohio, died March 22. Spouse: John H. Huntsberger. Parents: Samuel and Emma Rudy Wenger. Children: Donovan J., Maurice, Doris F. Zaugg; 10 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 24 at Auble Funeral Home, Orrville.

Liechty, Ruth Marie Conrad, 77, Goshen, Ind., died March 23 of pneumonia. Spouse: Stanley Liechty. Parents: Daniel and Luetta Kauffman Conrad. Children: Jeanne Liechty Dickens, Jonathan, Jered; two grandchildren. Funeral: March 26 at Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship, Goshen.

Moyer, Harold L., 90, Souderton, Pa., died March 22. Spouse: Kathryn Leatherman Moyer. Parents: Ulysses and Ella Landis Moyer. Children: Dale, Carl, Lynette Martin, Lois Hackman, Nancy Delp, Glen; 17 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 28 at Souderton Mennonite Summit View Auditorium.

Nafziger, Dorothy Alice Christner, 83, Archbold, Ohio, died Jan. 17. Spouse: Maurice E. Nafziger. Parents: Jacob and Mary Boshart Christner. Children: Ed, Ken, Annette Erbskorn, Darlette Cavin; 13 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 20 at Tedrow Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Nyce, Pearl Clemens Ruth, 93, Telford, Pa., died March 4. Spouse: Lawrence Moyer Nyce (deceased). Parents: John M. and Lizzie Clemens Ruth. Children: Joyce Kratz, John, Jerald; nine grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 9 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.

Rice, Raymond R., 85, Souderton, Pa., died March 13. Spouse: Esther A. Nyce Rice (deceased). Parents: Henry and Annie Rush Rice. Children: Lydia VanLuvanee, Lois Spengler, Steven, Henry; seven grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 22 at Souderton Mennonite Summit View Auditorium.

Schaer, Inez Heiser, 95, Fisher, Ill., died March 21. Spouse: Maurie Schaer (deceased). Parents: Alvin and Elizabeth Birkey Heiser. Children: Joan Cender, Virginia Oyer; four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Celebration of life service: March 30 at East Bend Cemetery, Fisher.

Shoup, Walter, 88, Orrville, Ohio, died March 20 following a four-month-long illness. Spouse: Ida Hess Shoup. Parents: Allen W. and Lenora Rothe Shoup. Children: Janet Roten, Joyce Marty, Joan Miller, Richard. Funeral: March 23 at Orrville Mennonite Church.

Statler, Glenn R., 49, Boswell, Pa., died Feb. 10 of cancer. Spouse: Melissa A. Smith Statler. Parents: Glenn R., Sr., and Dolores A. Kepko Statler, Windber, Pa. Children: Glenn R. III, Chad, Brandon, Courtney, McKensi Statler, Dawson. Funeral: Feb. 14 at Stahl Mennonite Church, Johnstown, Pa.

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Director of Project Development (new position) with a minimum of five years of supervisor/management experience, preferably in retirement services and health-related fields. Prefer experience in development of new programs and project management. Minimum bachelor's degree. Send a letter along with a resumé to Steven Ringenberg, at **Fairlawn Haven Nursing Home**, located at 407 E. Lutz Road, Archbold, OH 43502.

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) invites nominations and/or applications for the position of ***president***, expected to assume office sometime between Jan. 1, 2010, and July 1, 2010. AMBS is a fully accredited post-graduate seminary located in Elkhart, Ind., affiliated with Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. Additional information about the seminary and a complete description of this position can be located at www.ambs.edu. Qualifications: The ideal candidate for president will be an active follower of Jesus, a convinced Anabaptist and an advocate for the missional church in a diverse theological, denominational and faith context; have ability and passion for theological education and pastoral formation that includes new models of church, ministry and pedagogy; be a creative, entrepreneurial, visionary leader; demonstrate theological depth and have earned an advanced degree (Ph.D. or D.Min. strongly preferred); understand and be committed to the missions of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA.

Search process: Nominations and/or letters of application with CV or résumé may be submitted to Randall Jacobs, Chair of the Search Committee, c/o AMBSsearch@mennoniteeducation.org or through postal mail to AMBS Presidential Search Committee, c/o Mennonite Education Agency, 63846 County Road 35, Suite 1, Goshen, IN 46528-9621. The search committee will begin reviewing applications in Spring 2009 and continue until the position is filled. Women and minority people are encouraged to apply. AMBS, an affirmative action employer, is committed to Christian beliefs and values as interpreted by the Mennonite church.

Greeley Mennonite Church in beautiful northern Colorado desires candidates for the position of ***full-time lead pastor***. We seek a dedicated Anabaptist to provide spiritual and church growth leadership (as a friend, listener and teacher) and thoughtful sermons for our warm congregation of 60+ members. Salary provided in accordance with MC USA guidelines. Contact Herm Weaver at 303-895-0801; herm@MountainStatesMC.org.

Goshen College seeks ***director*** of a new Latino Studies Semester initiative to begin July 1, 2009. Responsibilities include the organization of study and service learning programs in the Latino communities of northern Indiana. Ph.D. preferred, master's required. Bilingual in Spanish/English required. Teaching and administrative experience desired. Must demonstrate ability to establish partnerships in the local Latino community. To apply, see the position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment. Goshen College, an affirmative action employer, is a liberal arts institution affiliated with Mennonite Church USA.

Dorm leaders. Ten-month full-time voluntary service position. **Western Mennonite School** seeks both male and female candidates to serve as dorm leaders for its high school dorm program. Experience working with youth preferred. Responsibilities include mentoring students, enforcing rules, planning and supervising activities. Candidates must be willing to work with students from other cultures, promote a positive Christ-centered community and be willing to work flexible hours. Applications accepted until positions filled. These voluntary service positions include a monthly stipend and medical and car insurance. Contact Zig Derochowski at 503-363-2000 or 866-343-9378 or zderochowski@westernmennoniteschool.org. Western offers an exceptional, Christ-centered education for grades 6-12 and is located on 45 beautiful acres within the Willamette Valley of the Pacific Northwest.

Highland Retreat in Bergton, Va., is seeking candidates for the position of ***executive director*** to begin in or near December 2009. Nestled in the mountains of western Virginia, Highland offers many outdoor activities, operates summer camping programs for youth, a lodge and retreat center for groups and is affiliated with the Virginia Mennonite Conference. Candidates should have leadership experience in a Christian camp or not-for-profit organization, experience in program development and/or strategic planning, strong interpersonal skills, visionary leadership attributes and a living Christian faith. The executive director is responsible to oversee camp operations, finances and staff, and work closely with the board of directors, donors and constituency. Please send cover letter, resumé and three letters of reference (one from pastor) to: Chair, Search Committee, Highland Retreat, c/o 61 S. Main St., Harrisonburg, VA 22801; www.highlandretreat.org.

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Mennonite Financial Federal Credit Union is seeking a vice president of lending to plan, organize, and direct its consumer, real estate, and business lending activities, and participate in establishing and implementing major goals and strategic objectives. The position is located in Lancaster, Pa. Qualified candidates will have executive-level experience in lending, negotiations, decision making, and business strategy planning.

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The Mennonite Church USA Search Committee asks for your prayers for calling a new Executive Director. If you think God might be calling you, read on and inquire. If you think of others who may be good candidates, please encourage them to apply or nominate them yourself.

We are seeking a dynamic Executive Director to lead Mennonite Church USA toward a Christ-centered spirituality and missional witness. The Executive Director, who is the chief executive officer and primary public spokesperson of the denomination, will inspire Mennonite Church USA through a compelling articulation of the vision, mission and priorities of the church. She/he will lead a team of staff to help bring alignment and synergy to the mission of agencies, executive staff functions and area conferences. A more complete job description may be viewed at www.MennoniteUSA.org/edsearch. Please send qualifications and/or questions to J. Richard Thomas at 2176 Lincoln Highway East, Lancaster, PA, 17602, by e-mail at thomasjr@lancastermennonite.org or by fax to (717) 299-0823. Responses should be received by April 30, 2009.

Individuals bringing diversity are encouraged to apply. Mennonite Church USA is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Mennonite Church USA conducts background investigations as part of the hiring process, and complies with federal and state requirements for non-discrimination in employment with regard to sex, age, race, color, disability and national and ethnic origin.

John Updike: a good neighbor

Levi Miller is director of Herald Press in Scottdale, Pa.

The reviews below are available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

Late at night on Jan. 26, I was reading *The Widows of Eastwick*. The next day I learned that the author of that novel, John Updike, had died. His death felt like losing a college friend with whom one made an annual contact, a good neighbor who came to see us once a year.

One of our children bought me a copy of *Widows* for Christmas. An Updike book was often a Christmas gift, an easy choice, since he turned out at least one book a year—all told more than 50 books, which included 28 novels; other titles included 13 short story collections, 10 poetry volumes and assorted collections of his prose.

Part of Updike's appeal for me and others my age was that we read him as young people in the 1960s and aged with him. He wrote of high school romance, young married-life choices, midlife angst and the regrets of older years. His most awarded four books, the Rabbit novels, have Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom dying at age 56. Death was never far away, even in youth.

Religiously, Updike was appealing because he also had the hope of the resurrection. A confessing Christian, he imbibed the Lutheranism of his youth, read the theologian Karl Barth as a young adult and remained an orthodox C.S. Lewis-type Christian to the end. Although he seldom wrote extensively of his Christian beliefs, his characters and narrators were often religiously articulate.

We meet the discredited (somewhat mad) minister in *A Month of Sundays*, the young evangelical graduate student in *Roger's Version*, the Unitarian minister Brenda Parsley in *The Witches of Eastwick*. Where else could you meet a Unitarian minister preaching on personal and original sin? Although his characters sinned badly, one had the feeling the narrator regretted their losses.

Updike wrote of sex, and many of us got started on Updike because he was one of the most explicit writers of sex of our generation. He was the Song of Songs poet for Baby Boomers and their social revolution. He shared the Hebraic writers' gender and generally presented a male's perspective, though not always.

In an epoch when writers and our imagination became fascinated with the minority experience—talented Jews, exotic immigrants and Latin American revolutionaries—Updike found inspiration in our suburbs, in the domesticity of the split-level house. While most writers pursued the heroic and the absurd, Updike described the seasons, such as the fall, in *The Witches of Eastwick*: "There comes a blessed moment in the year when we know we are mowing the lawn for the last time."

People of the Pennsylvania farmlands, where he was born in 1932, and the Northeastern suburbs, where he lived most of his adult life, populate his stories—though he occasionally wrote about other characters, such as a deposed African dictator in *The Coup* or a young Muslim in *The Terrorist*. Both he treated sympathetically.

He seemed like one of our friendly non-Mennonite neighbors, having grown up in Shillington, south of Reading, Pa. His Rabbit novels are set in that countryside. In his Pennsylvania stories one may meet a Mennonite doctor or visit a conservative Mennonite-owned store. Sometimes Amish appear in a story or poem.

Updike described more than he disturbed. Although vaguely liberal in his politics, he never seemed to need to carry his politics on his sleeve, much as he did not do this regarding his Christian beliefs. He remained civil, decent, ironic and mannerly.

He went to work every day and wrote a book—fiction (novel or short stories), poetry or criticism—each year. If he and we sinned, he seemed to regret it and went to church every Sunday; a generous God was still around. In an age of suicide bombers and tales sold by Amazon, full of sound and fury, he ended his last book with two of the three 70-year-old widows still standing, still working and planning another vacation. One can think of worse neighbors.

FILMS

Wendy and Lucy (R), described as a neorealism film by critics, follows a young woman and her dog over several long days on her unsuccessful road trip to Alaska. Wendy, homeless and poor, challenges what we assume of people in need, as well as societal structures. The film demonstrates the profound effects that small favors, such as lending a cell phone, some money or a word of encouragement, can have.—*Anna Groff*

Duplicity (PG-13) is a complex story of deceit that combines intrigue with humor and satire. Two ex-spies plot to infiltrate two corporations (selling skin care and hair products) and scam them out of big bucks. Satire always has a moral edge. This film shows corporations that spend money on stealing ideas rather than on creating their own. Another is that love requires trust, which duplicity destroys.—*gh*

BOOKS

Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity by Walter Klaassen and William Klassen (Herald Press, 2008, $32.99) gathers the fragments of information about this influencial Anabaptist leader to form a biography of a man who navigated his role as a skilled professional and his faith in a dangerous time. Mennonites need to learn about such forebears who helped form our beliefs.

Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire by William T. Cavanaugh (Eerdmans, 2008, $12) is a short but profound book of theological reflection with resonance for today's economic climate. Cavanaugh sees "the key to true freedom" as "cultivating right desires" and consumerism as a spiritual problem. He writes out of a Catholic tradition, which may be unfamiliar to readers. But these reflections are rich.

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Anna Groff

Sex offenders in the church

Many of us accept that we cannot ignore sexual abuse; victims and offenders worship in our congregations.

We must not continue to silence victims of sexual abuse as we have for years, nor can we demonize and alienate individuals who have committed sexual offenses. Yet God calls us to a third way.

What are ways for the church to address this challenge?

First, consider where and how we learn about sex offenses and disorders. Popular culture, especially in crime television shows like "Law & Order" and "CSI," often portrays sex offenders as inhuman and villains.

Mainstream media offer few examples that capture the complex nature of sexual disorders and sexual offenses.

In *The Other Side of Desire: Four Journeys into the Far Realms of Lust and Longing* (HarperCollins, 2009) journalist Daniel Bergner includes the story of "Roy"—a child molester who violated his preteen stepdaughter.

Bergner effectively weaves in clinical and scientific research on sexual abuse and disorders. He in no way excuses the man's actions, but offers Roy a degree of humanity and the opportunity to describe his struggles.

We must not continue to silence sexual abuse victims as we have for years, nor can we demonize and alienate sexual offenders.

In the book, Roy's therapist said of the offenders: "We want them to be the few, the perverted, the far away. We want there to be the clear line … It just doesn't exist."

In the film *Little Children*, a town responds to a new neighbor—a registered sex offender charged with indecent exposure. The main character, Brad, grapples with his neighbors' adamant feelings and actions against this man in their town. The film ends tragically.

Our society, including churches, finds comfort in labeling individuals who have committed deviant actions. We want to know who is in and out, forgiven and unforgiven.

However, how we label individuals and how the the criminal system labels individuals becomes complex and troubling.

For example, this year three girls ages 14 or 15 in Pennsylvania were charged with "disseminating child pornography" for texting nude photos of themselves to their boyfriends using their cell phones.

How can churches avoid these patterns of unhelpful labeling and isolating offenders, yet not ignore victims' needs or those among us who are vulnerable to offenders?

As the church leaders on pages 20-21 suggest, the task means incredible pain, but we must attempt to discuss it and work at it.

In fact, as clinical social worker Paul Unruh says, sexual abuse will damage more lives if we reject offenders.

Abuse is a devastating downward spiral. According to resources from Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), a majority of sex offenders experience physical and/or sexual abuse as children, most often by someone they knew.

"The offender's adult crimes may be in part a repetition and an acting out of a sexual offense he was subjected to as a child, a maladaptive effort to solve an unresolved early sexual trauma," writes A. Nicholas Groth in the MCC resource.

Unruh offers the house church model for congregations equipped to work at breaking the abuse cycle and who feel called to offer support to offenders.

Other ideas include church partnerships to educate members about sex abuse and start support groups for victims.

Perhaps churches that have fewer families and children are the most appropriate places to offer a community of love and accountability to offenders whom society alienates.

If we hope to end this cycle of sexual abuse, we must find ways to support both victims and offenders. A few pastors and congregations that have had the courage to find this third way can help lead us.—*ag*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

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The broken body of Christ

Isaac Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship.

"The body of Christ, broken for you." Communion draws us into brokenness. We don't turn and run from this torn body. We don't hide the wounds with a Band-Aid. At the Lord's Table we can't help but wait with brokenness. Through our remembering we tarry with the crucified Savior and come to discover that we also share in that brokenness. His wounds expose our own, or at least call us to consider our wounds. His torn flesh offers a window into our fractured lives. We find ourselves in his body. As the great spiritual writer Sebastian Moore puts it, the crucified Jesus is no stranger. In Christ, God becomes familiar with our broken human condition. God is no stranger to shattered, scattered bodies.

While this broken condition certainly applies to us individually, it also has to do with our communal bodies: our congregations and our denomination. In his book *A Precarious Peace*, Chris Huebner helps us think about this reality: "The church [is] a kind of dislocated identity ... a strange body that exists in a precarious state of unsettled tornness." Our Mennonite identity is always disturbed; the church is broken; our congregations are torn. People come and go. Disagreements reemerge and threaten to drive us apart. Congregations dissolve, and others are born.

The church is in a precarious state of unsettled tornness. That's simply what it means to be the body of Christ. We shouldn't attempt to hide our divisions and our wounds. In fact, we confess that this tornness is part of the good news. "The body of Christ, broken for you."

The tearing and scattering of the body of Christ took on new meaning for me a few months ago when Dave and Laura Nickel joined our congregation. Martha, one of our deacons, led the congregation through our liturgy to welcome them as new members. I closed the service with a prayer: "God, we ask you to build up this congregation through the continual outpouring of your gifts, gifts like Laura and Dave, so that we might receive the grace to uphold one another in the faith."

These new members infuse our church with new life. They are the enfleshed movement of the Holy Spirit. Laura and Dave joined our humble little flock and now help us discern what Christ's body looks like where we live. With their presence come the gifts needed for us to be faithful.

Laura and Dave transferred their membership from the Mennonite congregations of their youth. Their migration bears witness to the tornness of our church. It is too easy for my joy at their membership to blind me from the two churches that now experience loss. The bodies of Salem-Zion Mennonite Church (Freeman, S.D.) and Bethel Mennonite Church (Mountain Lake, Minn.) have been broken for my congregation.

When I consider such debts, all I can say is *thank you*. Thankfulness is what I've learned at the Lord's Table. At our Communion celebration, the loaf is torn into smaller and smaller pieces as it feeds many. We eat and say thank you. The oldest name for this practice is "Eucharist," which comes from a Greek word for thanksgiving. Communion is about gratitude; what is broken gives us life.

Thank you, Salem-Zion and Bethel. In many respects, your churches come with their presence. Your presence is felt in our midst through all that you've poured into Dave and Laura. Your life flows through them and now gives us life. We depend on these two gifts from your churches. Laura and Dave have become missionaries who share with us the good news they have learned from you. Through their presence, we discover how our congregations are broken pieces of the same loaf. TM

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

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Cover: Photo illustration by Dee Birkey

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

A dark day in Goshen

Recently we were informed that the *Chicago Tribune* would no longer be delivered to our area. I made my usual trek to the Goshen, Ind., library, to devour a week's sports pages to keep up with my beloved Chicago White Sox. On the shelf staring at me was a paper saying that the *Tribune* would no longer be delivered to Goshen. I took my latest issue of *OurFaith Digest* and headed for Long John Silver's to soothe my disappointment. When I opened it up, there was a smiling Joe Miller telling me goodbye.

Headlines screamed on the back page, "*OurFaith Digest* is on the Web!" "Come and See … Bigger and Better," "The grassroots every-home evangelical Mennonite/Anabaptist Web site!"

Tell that to my 94-year-old mother-in-law, an avid reader who sees the world and the church through the printed page. Tell her to check the Web site, and she will wonder what the spiders are up to now.

Why do I suddenly feel like a Model A Ford? I am asked if I enter a "chat room." No, our whole house is open for conversation. Do I have "MySpace?" I think the space around Shipshewana is pretty good, but I don't claim any of it as mine. Do I "Twitter"? I am twittering a lot lately during these cold, rainy, northern Indiana spring days. Do I check "Craigslist"? Why would I worry about his? I can hardly keep up with mine. Do I have a "Blackberry"? No, but we still have some blueberries that I put on my cereal.

If *The Mennonite* and *Mennonite Weekly Review* abandon me, I think I'll crawl into bed, pull up the covers, pray for the Lord to hurry his return and pray all the junk in cyberspace won't confuse him. *—Harvey Chupp, Shipshewana, Ind.*

IN THIS ISSUE

What is the appropriate dynamic between business acumen and running a congregation? Ernest Hershberger (page 8) provides a thoughtful analysis of this question and says, "Business logic can often be helpful in bringing some needed discipline and accountability … [but] it must always be subservient to Christ's vision and mission." We also publish, for the first time in English, the late John Howard Yoder's piece on Christians and economics (page 12). Sharon Clymer Landis (page 17) writes from her chicken house and says: "There will always be days when the chicken house fans don't dissipate bad aromas or when personal situations stink. In those moments, if I can behold my whole life, while living moment by moment, I can see incredible beauty." Just in time for Mother's Day, Sara Wenger Shenk looks at the meaning of family in "And Then There Were Three" (page 30).—*Editor*

Humans must be taught what is right

Regarding "Once for All" (April 7): I wonder what Darrin Belousek says about Psalm 51: "Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge." And what about Romans 6:23: "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"? And Hebrews 9:22: "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

Being just, God sees the value of responsibility for sin. We can see it in children and even adults who are not punished for wrongdoing. Humans must be taught to do right. To have no consequences for our sin would make sin rampant, as it was in the days of Noah. God himself took the payment for our sins in his son Jesus. But payment was made. He died because we sinned. No other reason.

If humans had not gone the way of sin, Jesus would not have had to die—so what's not penalty about that? And if Jesus had not died, we would be dead in our trespasses and sins, and there would be no hope for forgiveness. Remember, God is the same yesterday, today and forever. That means if he wiped out humanity in the days of Noah, he would do it again if wickedness increased as it did then. And wickedness would increase if Jesus had not made a way for righteousness to reign in humans through his Holy Spirit.

Why is it important that we do away with penal substitution? To fit God into our ideas of what is good and loving? We see through a glass darkly—very darkly it seems. God sees as things are. All the ways of looking at the death of Jesus help us understand what he did for us.*—Jean Martin, Valparaiso, Ind.*

The Corinthian Plan

My comments are about Mennonite Church USA's proposed health-care plan for pastors called The Corinthian Plan. I strongly affirm the principles of equality in the church that are set forth. That pastors from the ethnic majority in this country tend to have health insurance and those from the ethnic minorities tend not to is unacceptable and unchristian.

How about a little history lesson here? Did not we deal with this same issue just a few years ago? Didn't we get it right then? Isn't it working as hoped? Will we have it right this time?

Why a separate policy or program for pastors? What is the reason they cannot be simply included with MMA's general run of patrons? Are pastors that much better or worse a risk as a demographic?

How indeed is this not just nibbling at the symptoms of a systemic disease (health-care delivery) in our culture? How can we get MMA to prophetically lead the way to comprehensive, radical change in health-care delivery?

And one other question: How is singling out pastors for health care—instead of all in the congregation who have need—different from singling out an ethnic group (whites) for preferential treatment, as is now the de facto case. Clearly Paul was not talking to the Corinthians about just pastors in Jerusalem. So how is it The Corinthian Plan is limited to pastors?

I'm glad *The Mennonite* is addressing this issue.—*Maynard Shirk, Conestoga, Pa.*

Editor's note: *Keith Harder is Mennonite Church USA's Director for Health-Care Access for Pastors and Church Workers. He addressed these matters in his April 21 Leadership column. See also Harder's letter in the April 7 Readers Say section.*

Communion is whenever we eat together

Where does Communion come from? Is it just the Passover meal? The Passover is not the only place where the bread and wine were used.

I lived with a Jewish family when I lived in Allentown, Pa., as I trained in nursing. Every Sabbath, as we sat down for dinner, the candles were lit by the mother, and the Barocha (blessing) was said over the bread and then the wine. My sister married into the Jewish faith. At her son's Bar Mitzvah, the rabbi invited those attending to partake in the bread and wine after the service. My youngest son went to the table, took the bread and dipped it into the wine (intinction), the method used at the church we were then attending.

In Acts, before Paul warned the early Christians of the dangers of taking the bread and wine without thought, Communion was a fellowship meal. Perhaps Communion is more than just a service that we occasionally practice as Mennonites. Perhaps it is whenever we get together to eat. Jesus said, "Do this often in remembrance of me."—*Pat Schosser, Burnsville, N.C.*

Gettysburg Address paraphrased

With the election of President Obama, various writers and talking heads have compared him to Abraham Lincoln. As Lincoln's Gettysburg Address came to my mind, I felt compelled to paraphrase it for today's economic crisis:

Four score and some years ago, our forebears brought forth on this Kansas prairie the Crystal Springs community, conceived in Mennonite tradition and dedicated to the proposition that all members bonded together shall survive adversity. Now we are entering another era of severe economic depression, testing whether the community spirit so conceived can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield with financial fraud and abuse. We have come to commiserate and to name those at fault. It is understandable that we do so. But in a larger sense, we cannot waste time faulting any people, corporations or sector of our great nation. We cannot get lost in such trivial pursuit, although it may feel good to do so.

The U.S. economy will eventually right itself, but in the meantime we must tighten our belts and carry on through the dark days ahead. We must adapt ourselves to the fact that the world economy will be different. We must apply the principles of our fathers and mothers, supporting each other as needed with the gatherings of friends and family, economizing as they did with popcorn for snacks. We shall show that the sacrifices of our mothers and fathers to build a better life for us shall not have been done in vain—that this community spirit under God shall have a new birth of freedom and that the principles of faith and stewardship, of the people, by the people and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.—*Hal Boyts, Overland Park, Kan.*

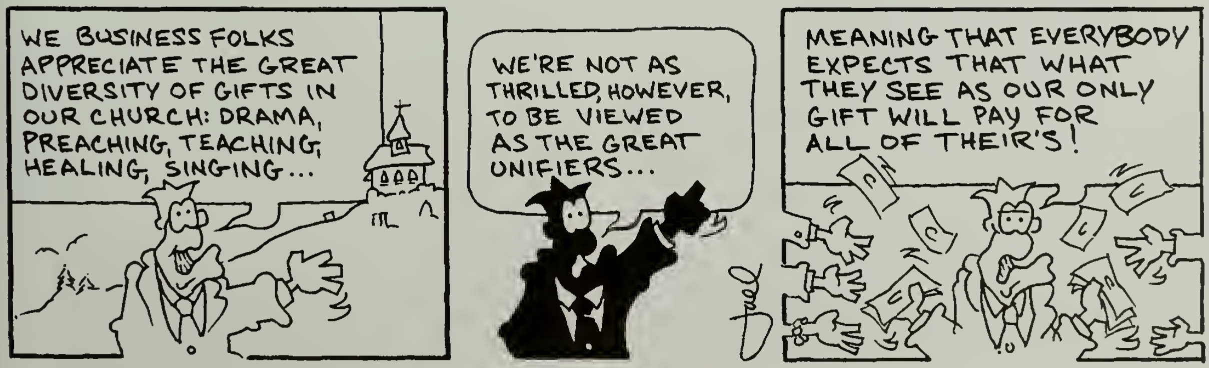
ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Business people in my congregation are: (38 votes)

- ○ listened to (53%)
- ○ not listened to (5%)
- ○ some are, some aren't (37%)
- ○ Not sure (5%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


WE BUSINESS FOLKS APPRECIATE THE GREAT DIVERSITY OF GIFTS IN OUR CHURCH: DRAMA, PREACHING, TEACHING, HEALING, SINGING...
WE'RE NOT AS THRILLED, HOWEVER, TO BE VIEWED AS THE GREAT UNIFIERS...
MEANING THAT EVERYBODY EXPECTS THAT WHAT THEY SEE AS OUR ONLY GIFT WILL PAY FOR ALL OF THEIR'S!
Joel

IN BRIEF

MC Canada responds to 'A Common Word'

Mennonite Church Canada leaders have sent a letter to Muslim leaders of the Web site at www.acommonword.com, self-described as "an initiative by Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals from many different countries, denominations and schools of thought" advocating for dialogue and understanding between Muslims and Christians. In an email exchange, Rudy Baergen, chair of MC Canada's faith and life committee, says, "The Mennonite church has constantly affirmed that world peace is God's will, and we have put much energy and many resources into promoting peace. It seemed quite appropriate that we would join other Christian voices in encouraging such an initiative of dialogue between the Muslim and Christian families." MC Canada's letter of response can be found at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/983. At the time of writing, MC Canada's response letter had not yet been posted to www.acommonword.com.
—*MC Canada*

Ear damage?

- Time per day one can listen to music with stock iPod earphones at 60 percent volume without hearing damage: 18 hours
- At 80 percent volume: 1.2 hours
- At 100 percent volume: 5 minutes

—*YES! magazine*

Mennonite mission work is changing

ELKHART, Ind.—Mennonite Mission Network ministries and priorities are being driven by changing world trends. This was the conclusion of a March 22-25 meeting in Chicago that brought together Mission Network staff, board members, international workers and partners from around the world.

Increasingly, the vital center of gravity in the church is shifting from the West and North to congregations in the East and South. This trend in the church mimics similar geographical changes around the world. Ministries are also shaped by the awareness that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening, and wealth is becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of few.

"We want to be engaged in places where we can develop leaders who have a missional vision for the church," said Peter Graber, Mission Network's director of development. "We want to keep our whole gospel theology, working with physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being, being clear that peace and reconciliation are an integral part of the gospel and seeking to learn from and serve those on the margins as well as the mainstream."

In some cases, mission workers must remain completely behind the scenes, supporting local and indigenous efforts, building relationships and being present without being noticed. Emmanuel Minj of India's Bihar Mennonite Mandli affirmed this idea and complimented Mennonite workers and agencies for being virtually invisible supporters of the Mennonite churches in India.

While Mennonite Mission Network continues decades of moving from models of dependence to models of mutuality, participants also said mission must be used to awaken deeper levels of faith within Mennonite Church USA and the world.
—*Mennonite Mission Network*

BAN
CLUSTER
BOMBS

Stanislas Fradelizi

Postcards call to end cluster bomb violence

This photo of Ta Douangchom, a cluster bomb survivor, is used in Mennonite Central Committee's postcard campaign to support the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act, legislation that would restrict the use of cluster bombs by the United States. To obtain the postcards, go to the MCC Store at mccstore.org, or phone toll free 888-563-4676. There is a charge for shipping, but the postcards are free.—*MCC*

Lancaster senior dies after car accident

LANCASTER, Pa.—Micah Berthold, 18-year-old senior at Lancaster Mennonite High School, died April 8 after a car accident early April 7.

Micah Berthold

"He was a well-rounded young man," Lancaster Mennonite High School principal Miles Yoder says. "He was very popular with his peers and everyone here at school."

Berthold was the son of Josef and Brenda Berthold of Lancaster. His father is pastor of West End Mennonite Fellowship in Lancaster. He was the brother of Dominik, a sophomore at Mennonite High, and Jeremy, a sixth-grader at Lancaster Mennonite Middle School.

The two-vehicle crash occurred just after midnight Tuesday on Route 41 in Highland Township in Chester County, about five miles east of Lancaster County. According to police, Berthold was driving a Volkswagen Jetta when it collided with a GMC sport utility vehicle. State police say the Jetta was traveling south and veered into the northbound lane, striking the SUV. The SUV overturned and became engulfed in flames. Its driver, David Prange, got out and suffered minor injuries.—*Cindy Stauffer,* Lancaster New Era

Mennonite VBS 2009 curriculum 'top pick'

NEWTON, Kan.—Mennonite Publishing Network's 2009 Vacation Bible School curriculum has been selected as a "top pick" by the Center for the Ministry of Teaching of Virginia Theological Seminary (CMT).

Catch the Spirit! Join God's Work in the World was cited for its "upbeat and nonjudgmental tone and strong message of evangelism." The Center's evaluation highlights the curriculum's focus on worship and the original music by Mennonite com-

Melanie Zuercher

ethel College students work on springtime calculus

n a warm day in North Newton, Kan., Bethel College Calculus II udents study outside. From left, associate professor hristopher Earles reviews the calculations written in chalk in e sidewalk by Eric Goering and Jordan Esely-Kohlman. -*Bethel College*

poser Bryan Moyer Suderman as particular strengths. Other strengths of *Catch the Spirit!* listed by the CMT are the availability of an all-inclusive kit containing everything needed for a VBS program; separate guides for preschool, primary (grades 1-2), middler (grades 3-5) and junior youth (grades 6-8); provision of ideas for adapting the materials; suggestions for simple, easy-to-find materials; easy-to-learn music that supports the theme and represents a variety of cultures and languages; suggestions for working with children with special needs, including ADHD/ADD; and a mission/outreach component.—*Mennonite Church USA*

MCC supports Sudanese churches' peace work

AKRON, Pa.—Mennonite Central Committee is supporting several Sudanese churches and church agencies, such as the Sudan Council of Churches, in mediating conflicts and promoting peace. In November 2008, the SCC began a series of public meetings in Southern Sudan's Juba and Magwi counties to discuss land disputes that have arisen as Southern Sudanese refugees have streamed back to the area following the war. MCC is sponsoring these meetings and plans to support the SCC in educating communities about the 2011 referendum. MCC is also providing $150,000 to the Catholic Diocese of Rumbek to construct a center for AIDS treatment, education and counseling as well as expanding its team in Sudan from three workers to six in the coming months.—*MCC*

Gainesville church hosts interfaith Seder

GAINESVILLE, Fla.—Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Gainesville hosted an interfaith "Seder for the Children of Abraham" on April 8, with about 70 participants—roughly one-third Muslim, one-third Jewish and one-third Christian.

This ecumenical Passover seder was the first public event sponsored by United Voices for Peace, a grass-roots initiative of Gainesville Jews, Muslims and Christians. The group was formed after a small number of local Jews and Muslims gathered for a peace demonstration in Gainesville in response to the suffering of the Israeli incursion into Gaza. The participants arranged to meet for study and dialogue on Middle East issues and contacted Emmanuel Mennonite Church, which rents space from Westminster Presbyterian Church, for a place to meet. Westminster agreed to share their facilities, and Eve and Dick MacMaster of Emmanuel agreed to serve on the steering committee of United Voices.—*Emmanuel Mennonite Church*

Pioneer mission worker to Colombia dies

WARREN, Ind.—Janet Soldner Nussbaum, one of the first Mennonite missionaries to Colombia, died April 9 at Heritage Pointe in Warren, Ind., at the age of 90. She served in Colombia for more than three decades, then spent four years in Mexico with the Commission on Overseas Mission, a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network.

Soldner Nussbaum, along with three other COM workers, traveled to Colombia in 1945 to begin a ministry on an eight-acre farm near Cachipay, a small town on the eastern range of the Colombian Andes. This team began work in Colombia the same year a Mennonite Brethren team arrived in the community of Palmira. Out of the Cachipay ministry grew Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia (Colombia Mennonite Church) as well as a clinic and an elementary boarding school.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

MEDA casts wider (malaria) net to save more

WATERLOO, Ont.—Mennonite Economic Development Associates is launching a new $21 million project in Tanzania to get young children sleeping under life-protecting malaria nets over the next two years. Working with the country's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the Global Fund for Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, MEDA will be coordinating the distribution of 7.2 million long-lasting insecticidal nets at no cost to children under age 5 at village events over the next 12 months through a nationwide campaign. —*MEDA*

—compiled by Anna Groff

IN BRIEF

Harder reappointed at Bluffton

The Bluffton (Ohio) University board of trustees has reappointed James M. Harder for his second three-year term as president. Harder became president in August 2006. During his first term, the university expanded the offering of its MBA program at Northwest State Community College in Archbold, Ohio, and added new undergraduate majors and a second bachelor's degree completion program. Harder also led strategic planning and re-accreditation processes and implemented the campus master plan, including design approval for its next facility, a Health and Fitness Education center, the university's first planned LEED-certified building.—*Bluffton University*

Military spending

According to www.truemajority.org, U.S. military spending per year is $711 billion, while China's is $122 billion, Russia's $70 billion, and Iran and North Korea a combined $12.1 billion. That $711 billion, plus another $200 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, compares with these areas of domestic spending: $38 billion for K-12 education, $19 billion for humanitarian foreign aid, $6.8 billion for children's health care, $6 billion for job training and $1.3 billion to reduce dependence on oil. *—Truemajority.org*

Consider how business theory applies to the church. Some believe it is the definitive model of how to do church. Others are more skeptical. The church is in the world and submits (hopefully with eyes wide open) to some of the basic laws of earthly economics, but it is not of the world. It has a different origin and orientation with a different mission. The church transcends business in at least three major areas.

The business of the church is to restore and grow healthy relationships with God, people and God's creation.

the business of church

Things they don't teach in seminary

by Ernest J. Hershberger

The bottom line: The business of business is to return a profit for shareholders or owners—to make money or produce value. Unless income exceeds outgo, the enterprise is "on the ropes," whether for profit or not-for-profit. This is not evil but a simple fact of life in the current economy.

The business of the church, on the other hand, is to restore and grow healthy relationships with God, people and God's creation. Reconnecting people with their Creator is its reason for existence. These two diverging purposes must be held in tension with each other. Our personal values determine where the line is drawn. Jesus himself said, "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, ... You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matthew 6:24).

The church uses money but is not finally dependent on it. Money is only one of God's many provisions. Prayer, faith, the gifts of the Spirit, God's Word and time are always more significant resources than money. God has unlimited resources. God expects us to use all these resources wisely and for God's glory.

The true "business" of church is an ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. His work cannot be measured by the metrics of the bottom line. Indeed, the highest values of the church—love, joy, peace, patience, contentment and generosity defy any human yardstick. The fruit of the Spirit cannot be managed into existence; it can only be grown through God's Spirit.

Grace: Grace permeates everything a congregation is and does. Grace is the foundational value in the church. Our worth as human beings descends from the Heavenly Father, who created us. This value is inherent and cannot be earned or commodified. God accepts us because he loves us, not because of what we bring to the church. God offers grace to everyone who comes to him in faith. In contrast, the business world requires proof of value and places a high priority on performance and efficiency.

Christians function through grace. Every believer receives a significant ministry capacity through the gifts of the Spirit. These are given completely, apart from performance. Not a single gift of the Holy Spirit is given for private, personal benefit but for building up the body of Christ. In business, performance and merit are basic principles that determine both responsibility and reward. No one is employed who cannot benefit the enterprise. Those who do not produce are let go, sometimes ruthlessly. God does not do that. Our value is not based on performance.

Secular ability does not give anyone an advantage in the work of the church; it does not automatically transfer. In 1 Corinthians 6, the Apostle Paul makes the shocking suggestion that the most insignificant Christian is more qualified as a conflict mediator than a secular judge. All secular ability must first be reoriented to conform to the values and mission of Jesus Christ. Gifted teachers, orators, musicians, coaches, athletes, actors, administrators and financial managers should not expect their abilities to transfer directly into the life of the church.

Leadership is where the distinction between the church and business is most pronounced and often least appreciated (even in many seminaries).

Christians give in response to God's grace. Grace is the churches' "economic engine." Generosity is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. The essence of Christian giving is *not* in response to external need; God does not need our money. Instead we give in order to disconnect ourselves from the dominant values of our culture. Our giving reveals the depth of our faith in God to provide for our security. Truly we have given nothing to God until it impacts our lifestyles. He desires our first and our best, not our leftovers.

"Give us this day our daily bread." Grace is a daily blessing. We believe God is the daily provider of our needs. The church must use all the resources God provides today for ministry today, trusting that God will provide all the resources tomorrow for what he wants us to do tomorrow. The church has a pedal-to-the-metal mentality when it comes to doing ministry.

Leadership: Leadership is where the distinction between the church and business is most pronounced and often least appreciated (even in many seminaries). "Servant leadership" may be taught in pastoral theology, while in another room across the hall, modern business and leadership techniques are being taught in practical theology. This

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

disconnect often leaves seminarians scratching their heads.

Jesus clearly taught a "servant leader" model. But what does that mean? Does it merely provide a "Christian" twist to the apparent truths of the secular business-management-leadership model, or is it a completely different approach? Jesus calls every Christian to follow him. Therefore servant leadership is derived from discipleship. "Follow me as I follow Christ" discipleship defines leadership. Pastoral leadership is therefore fundamentally different. The common New Testament term for leadership ("proistemi") does not have the modern connotations of executive direction or management but is more protective and pastoral. The executive director type of leadership is an alien concept in the church.

In business, the vision for the enterprise comes from the person (or people) in control. Success depends on the leader's ability to produce the desired outcome. The leader lives by quantifiable results. He or she constantly evaluates inputs and outputs, process and procedure, using rational measuring sticks to "tweak" the entire process. "If you can't measure it, don't bother with it" describes the underlying process. Again, this is not evil but a recognition of reality.

Business logic can be helpful in bringing needed discipline and accountability to a congregation's more mundane processes, but it must always be subservient to Christ's vision and mission.

The vision for the church descends from above, from Christ, who is our head. He is alive and actively building his church. For pastors this means that their own vision for the church is valid only to the extent that it conforms to the vision of Jesus Christ. Pastors are neither the "owners" of the church nor the source of its vision; they are simply resources to the congregation for discerning the leading of Christ.

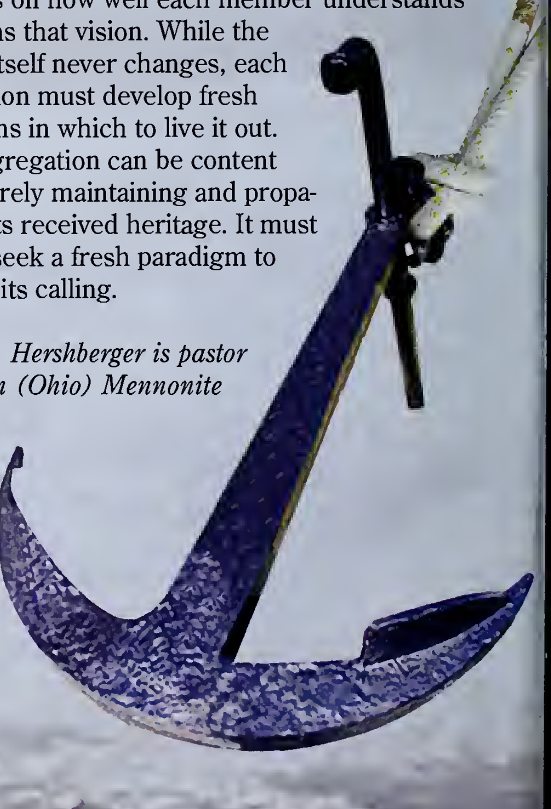
Pastoral leadership focuses on illuminating Christ's vision and developing the internal character of each believer for maximum participation in his mission. The pastoral method is invitational and noncoercive. That kind of leadership may feel messy to those who prefer the structure of the business plan. Since producing results in the congregation depends on the internal and voluntary response of each believer to the Holy Spirit, both the process and its outcomes are beyond the pastor's control. Pastoral leadership places a high priority on nurturing those who are highly committed (disciplined) to excellence and are internally motivated by God's Spirit to participate in Christ's mission.

The church can appreciate some of the gifts that business thinking can bring. The entrepreneurial mindset can be a tremendous asset to help the congregation think outside the box when it comes to doing Christ's mission. Business logic can often be helpful in bringing some needed discipline and accountability to some of its more mundane processes.

But it cannot be the ultimate authority; it must always be subservient to Christ's vision and mission. Business thinking has some serious limitations that cannot be overlooked. As one writer commented: "The church is not the business world. As I've observed the effects of the business world on people's lives, it doesn't produce the traits the church is all about: joy, contentment, grace and love" (*Leadership*, Spring 2006). Quick, decisive action is highly valued in business. But unless the whole congregation and its leadership share a clear understanding of Christ's vision, the "bully shepherd" will quickly scatter the sheep. Shepherding a congregation requires teaching, discernment and much patience.

How does a congregation combat stagnation? Simply by focusing afresh on the vision of the living Christ for his church. A congregation's health depends on how well each member understands and owns that vision. While the gospel itself never changes, each generation must develop fresh wineskins in which to live it out. No congregation can be content with merely maintaining and propagating its received heritage. It must always seek a fresh paradigm to achieve its calling.

Ernest J. Hershberger is pastor at Berlin (Ohio) Mennonite Church.



Heavens

by Jesse Nathan

When in September 1882
a fragment rivaled the sun
as it fell past the sun,
hit perihelion, grazed the day
with its light as it faded
winking into oblivion,
the Mennonite
wrote his kin
in Kansas
a yellowed letter
from an Uzbek desert
that fourteen horses
were full of goiters,
the wagon wheels
shot, the children
tired and bored.
But we are well, he says.
(As he writes he sips hot coffee
from a copper samovar.)
The comet came, he says,
it kept us awake.
We read by its light.
Sang hymns to the night.
Played games in the street.
Even the sun at noon the next day
did not diminish the moment much.
Tell Ma it was a momentous event,
us wandering madly, hands aloft
to shield, to see that vein of star,
to track its track, its bleed
of white across the sky.
Tell Ma the red cow
calved an hour ago.
It's a black bull.
A trophy for the market.
And though an axle broke on the road,
though there's no good rope
around to drag the wagon out,
though sheets of sand swept up,
though Jantzen's boy caught a thumb
in a wheel—clipped it clean—
though climate typhus takes its toll
we know we'll find a place to pray.
We'll pray we recognize the signs
that slice and score the sky.
We'll pray for tomatoes, fat potatoes,
for brittle whispering fields of wheat.
We'll pray for spring, water, tougher feet.
We'll pray we're steady as the sun
until our sudden one
bright quiet comet comes.

Jesse Nathan is an associate editor at McSweeney's *in Berkeley, Calif.*

The church and econo

Brief theological considerations

by John Howard Yoder

This article was originally written and published in German as "Christ und Wirtschaft," Der Mennonit. *Internationales mennonitisches Gemeindeblatt 26/11 (November 1973): 161-162. John Howard Yoder was invited by the "Union of German Mennonite Congregations" in June 1973 to stimulate reflection and discussion on the topic "The Christian and Economics." The editor of* Der Mennonit *asked Yoder to write a brief article on the basis of his lecture notes. Almost 36 years later, this first English translation offers some helpful theological categories and economic options for missional churches seeking to be "salt and light" in a post-Christendom context.*—Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, translator.

The economic order belongs to the realm of Christian responsibility.

The biblical sources

1. The Bible understands humans as economic beings. According to the Creation account, responsibility for tending the "garden" and administering the animal world belong to the essence of humanity. Fall occurs in the form of a misuse of the organic world that is entrusted to humanity. The punishment is portrayed as a transformation of the conditions of human work. Christians have not always taught in this manner. Later, the essence of humanity was seen as a soul or spirit trapped in and separable from bodily reality. In contrast, 19th-century Marxism connected itself to biblical thought by emphasizing that humans are fundamentally economic beings.

2. God's will for human beings includes an ordered, fruitful relationship with the world of things. The prophetic view of salvation promises production of land and habitation. When injustice is condemned, it occurs in the form of a demand for the rights of widows and the poor. The Mosaic Law provides for a regular and repeating "Jubilee Year" that makes a new economic beginning possible.

3. Salvation as proclaimed by Jesus includes a new economic order. Already John the Baptist described the "fruit of repentance" as a distribution of goods and the cessation of extortion. In his sermons Jesus proclaimed the advent of the Year of Jubilee (Luke 4). Even the beatitudes and woes (Luke 6) declare the message of the kingdom in an economic form.

Models from the history of Christianity

These theses based upon the biblical sources make the problem obvious: The economic order belongs to the realm of Christian responsibility. But how? We can no longer afford to spiritualize and downplay these features of the biblical message. But how should we take them seriously—in light of the technological revolution and in light of newer theoretical questions?

My contribution to this question, which must remain brief, can be presented best by describing various positions on this issue from the Reformation era. I will present various solutions, and it will become clear that these continue to be instructive even today.

1. The continuous-theocratic model is found in Catholicism. The whole of society is viewed as baptized under the term "Christendom." Economic relationships are understood as divinely established. On the edges of this system there are also criticisms, visible especially in the symbolic poverty of monks and in the prohibition of usury (charging interest on borrowed money). The church itself emerges as an economic power that is associated with the state.

2. The theocratic-Reformation model is found in Zwingli and later in Anglo-Saxon Puritanism. As with the first model, the whole of society is viewed as Christian and administered by Christian princes and Christian states. Existing forms, however, are not simply accepted but transformed. The force of the prophetic Word and the force of the police are united in the service of better justice (the prohibition of usury and luxury, the care for the poor, fostering education, industriousness). Soon the strength of faith becomes the power of a superior culture (colonialism, capitalism, democracy), which can be read as a proof of divine guidance.

3. The theocratic-revolutionary model is found not in one singular form but in many forms that dif-

nics after Christendom

fer from case to case. This concept takes on life where people are dissatisfied with the likely limits of what can be attained. In many respects, however, there is overlap with the second model: Both models render homage to those who use force, seek to destroy the enemies of God, identify the affairs of God with human programs and seek better justice on a path that goes through the state.

4. The dualistic model of Martin Luther is directed against this identification of divine and human affairs. In this model, the economic structures are affirmed in their autonomy. This averts the risk that the gospel will be altered through any linkage to political goals. Pietism accepts Luther's model but functions more critically and, in this case, more imaginatively (e.g., care for the poor, children's homes). But access to the economic realm occurs only through the heart of the prosperous individual. The economic structures as such are not challenged.

5. In a different manner than Luther, Anabaptism rejects the violent self-justification of reformed and revolutionary theocracies. In a different manner than Zwingli, it rejects the conservatism of the Lutheran and Catholic models that bless what is. The Anabaptists leveraged their critique at the point where none of the other movements had been critical. Above all they did not assume that the same doctrine of right action must obtain for all, for believers and unbelievers. Neither did they suppose that those who govern were as a whole Christian. In other words, the lifestyle of a confessional community does not need to be developed into an ethic for all. Moreover, the community of faith does not necessarily need to be in the position to rule the world with its ethics.

In this way the Anabaptists reopened the path for a fundamental critique of the system from the gospel. The bearer of this critique was the congregation as an alternative order: At least in part it already lives in a reality it cannot force upon the world. This becomes visible in the renunciation of usury (charging interest), in the community of goods (as among the Moravian Hutterite Brethren) or in the charge of deacons to care for the poor of the congregation, and in the distinction between vocations that are useful and those that are not.

The contemporary situation

Today a similar range of possible strategies are available to us:

- a fundamental affirmation of the existing order with critique only within the system;
- a critique via individuals who have become insightful;
- a critique along the path of radical alteration of the system;
- a critique via the voluntary otherness of the servant people of God, who—despite their rejection of violence—never identify themselves with what is. The notion of a voluntary congregation bridges the tension between the individual and the system.

But these intellectually distinguishable possibilities are no longer identical with current theological and ecclesiastical options. Talk of revolution is heard today, especially in the Third World, because it has become obvious that the reforms of the prosperous—who mean well—are not sufficient. Only rarely is the Anabaptist idea of a nonviolent alternative community adopted, usually by groups who cannot compete with the great powers of the industrial world.

The lifestyle of a confessional community does not need to be developed into an ethic for all.

Trust in a gradual improvement of the situation implemented through official channels (i.e., the puritan model) is also rare today, though it was evident among some Christians who lived in the socialist world. Most of us, including Mennonites, end up in the "catholic" or "pietist" models, which leave the system as it is untouched. Yet as individuals we hope that each in his or her little corner can improve something. But can we really presume thereby to have met the challenges and the offer of the gospel?

John Howard Yoder, a Mennonite theologian who died in 1997. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, associate academic dean at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto, translated it and sent it to us.

The years

4 course corrections for the Mennonite church

by C. Norman Kraus

Asked to give a talk on "the years ahead," felt daunting. I'm in my mid-80s, and I was speaking to a class of 1948 high school graduates celebrating their 60th anniversary. What does a class adviser say to gray heads of his own generation that might be relevant to what is ahead? How do I assess a future that few of us might live to see?

I used the metaphor of a kayak trip down a swift-flowing river—the James River, since I had grown up at its mouth, where it empties into Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Not only does the river begin swiftly as a mountain stream and end up pushed back by the ocean's salty tides, it has its share of rapids and portage points along the way.

But another, perhaps more consequential aspect of the metaphor comes to mind. The trip begins with shallow rapids and obvious shore lines; the challenge is to keep the kayak afloat in the stream. As we proceed downstream, the shoreline recedes, and we are no longer propelled by the force of rapidly flowing water. Indeed, unless we want to stay close to shore, we exchange the kayak for a more substantial motor boat, and the task of steering is to follow the buoys that mark the channel. Then at the river's mouth we find ourselves in the ocean, where no shoreline or buoys are visible, only the horizon, which stretches as a circle surrounding us. Now we must look to the stars for direction.

The ocean in which we find ourselves is called "global culture." The boat we sail in is far more complicated to operate than our original kayaks and rowboats and requires a much more sophisticated technical navigational system than we began with. The waves of nuclear and ecological crises that threaten to overwhelm the political and economic strategies for navigating remind me of the hurricane winds, treacherous currents and unknown shorelines that finally defeated Columbus' fourth and last voyage seeking to find a way to reach the Pacific Ocean. Or, to change the picture, we can no longer catch a comforting glimpse of Mount Fuji, as the Japanese fishermen caught in the tsunami wave are depicted in the famous print from the series "Thirty-Six Views of Fuji." We really are dependent on the stars.

The Mennonite reality is that we are beyond the shorelines of tradition that provided navigation points for our ancestors. We have completed our institutional development, begun at the start of the last century. We have publishing, mission, media, education and social service organizations that function with technical competence. We have a trained professional pastoral ministry—something that made even our recent forebears apprehensive. We have a professional public media of superb quality that was unimaginable at mid-19th century. We have universities and seminaries, small though they are, and a relief and development organization, all of which are known around the world for their peace and service witness.

We have moved ahead gingerly, but the tide of history has relentlessly swept us into the depths of the global culture. Perhaps the amazing growth and development of Mennonite World Conference in the past 50 years is the best single reflection of these changes. The Mennonite church has become a multi-national, multiethnic, multilingual, multi-institutional, global cultural movement. Is it any wonder minor organizational crises occur in the management of this worldwide, institutional tsunami? We have developed an institutional presence in modern global society that calls for a theological rationale and political (in the good sense of that word) strategy beyond the traditional biblicism of our 19th-century forebears.

Reading between the lines, one can trace these theological and ecclesial developments in our doctrinal statements from 1921 to 1995, which move from biblical literalism to a more nuanced theology of spiritual discernment. One of the most obvious shifts of emphasis in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) is its movement toward a more spiritual reading of the biblical text as the basis for church discernment. There is a far more nuanced understanding of the relation of the Holy Spirit to the writing, interpretation and application of Scripture to our modern culture.

What might this indicate for the years ahead? What course corrections or refocusing might be

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Halmahera
Sao-Siu
Gorontalo
Togian
Tg Pangkalsiang
Labuha
Bacan
Peleng
Banggai
Taliabu
Todeli
Mangole
Dofa
Obi
Kepulauan Sula
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Waigeo
Selat Dampir
Sorong
Kwoka
Jazirah Doberai
Manokwari
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Fafanlap
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Teluk Cenderawasih
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Teluk Berau
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Dili
Manatuto
Kepulauan Leti
Kepulauan Solor

The tide of history has relentlessly swept us into the depths of the global culture.

Photo illustration | Dee Birkey

In the years ahead we must discern new strategies of accommodation and witness that reflect the spirit of Jesus.

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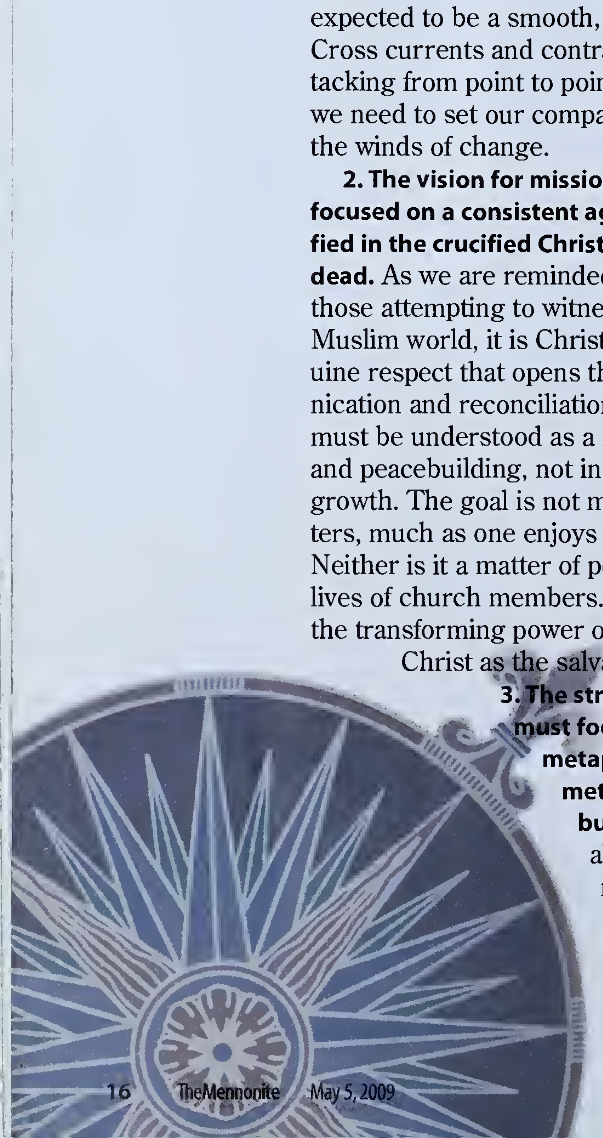
called for? What areas of concern require priority attention? I suggest four for consideration as we plot our future course.

1. Our institutional strategy for church growth. Growth should not mean only a larger, better-organized and financed denomination but the global cross-cultural dissemination of what Clarence Jordan called “the God Movement.” This suggests that it should be focused on the multicultural, multinational brother/sisterhood that is becoming reality in Mennonite World Conference. MWC should be thoroughly integrated with Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Central Committee, not in competition with them. This cannot be expected to be a smooth, well-ordered procedure. Cross currents and contrary winds may require tacking from point to point against the wind, but we need to set our compass by the stars, not by the winds of change.

2. The vision for mission will need to be more focused on a consistent agapeic witness exemplified in the crucified Christ God raised from the dead. As we are reminded again and again by those attempting to witness for Christ in the Muslim world, it is Christlike compassion and genuine respect that opens the possibility for communication and reconciliation. The missional goal must be understood as a ministry of reconciliation and peacebuilding, not institutional church growth. The goal is not multiplying worship centers, much as one enjoys praise and fellowship. Neither is it a matter of perfecting the spiritual lives of church members. Rather it is introducing the transforming power of God’s shalom offered in Christ as the salvation of the world.

3. The strategy for social witness must focus more on Jesus’ metaphor of salt than on the metaphor of light from a city built on a hill. Our traditional concentration on the metaphor of light has suggested withdrawn communities of piety to be examples of the kingdom of God. If we are to concentrate on the metaphor of light, then at least it should be the metaphor of not keeping our light hidden under a bushel basket (Matthew 5:14-15). Today the Mennonite community finds itself embedded and immersed in the professional, business and even political spheres of society. The salt metaphor suggests not withdrawal into pristine communities but positive involvement in the life of the society where we find ourselves. In the words of Jeremiah (29:7) to the Israelites who were taken captive to Babylon, we are called to “seek the welfare of the city” where we live as “resident aliens.” In the years ahead we must discern new strategies of accommodation and witness that reflect the spirit of Jesus.



4. At the beginning of this new century, finding ourselves too far beyond the visible shoreline with its lighthouses to warn us of shoals and shallows, we are compelled to rely on a new guidance system. We must reassess our framing and use of Scripture as a guide and give more prominence to and trust in the Holy Spirit to fulfill its role in guiding the followers of Christ. We have rightly been wary of a Pentecostal understanding of the Spirit’s role as an antidote for biblicism, but we must not allow tradition to inhibit our trust in the Spirit to reveal “truth as it is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21) for our present situation. Jesus himself recognized the historical limitations of conveying “truth,” and he promised that his “Spirit of truth” would stay with us to guide us into “all truth.” To close with the metaphor, the stars—or must we update and say satellites—symbolize the Spirit of Jesus that beyond the shoreline of sacred tradition must be our navigational guide.

C. Norman Kraus is a member of Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

Prayerfully present

A transformation from unhappiness to gratitude

by Sharon Clymer Landis

Kwest19 | Dreamstime.com

I stifle a gag as I open the door to the chicken house. My nose reacts as if suddenly submerged in water; the strong scent of ammonia chokes out the freshness of early morning on the farm. I don't want to be part of this "chicken concentration camp," as I often call my farmer husband's main source of income, 35,000 laying hens. Not only does the hen house assault my nose, it also offends me. I don't enjoy the dirty, boring work of gathering eggs, but I love my kind husband, so, saying nothing, I take my place beside him and stack egg flats onto the cart beside the conveyor belt. I work quietly, while internal grumbling rises in a wave.

During a lull in the egg flow, I look out the door at the beauty of the bitter cold morning. Late March snow covers the fields, mist hugs the land and the rising sun paints the scene with rosy softness. The metal hand railing on the tiny porch outside the door glitters with delicate frost crystals. Horses munch hay, their backs sprinkled with crisp snow. Steamy breath wafts around their heads, adding to the gentle morning mist.

Suddenly, egg flats ram into each other at the end of the conveyor. I leap into action, grabbing and stacking before the flats can buckle or upend, exploding into a gooey, snotty, drippy mess of crumpled shells, yolks and whites. As I stack egg flats, I fume about not being able to open the door for extra ventilation. I grumble about being stuck here morning and evening, doing a job I dislike. Ranting on silently, I work at the dirty job before me while longing for a walk in the beautiful countryside. I waffle between trying to pay attention, and escaping the present monotony by day dreaming.

Finally, tiring of my peevishness, I bring my attention to what I touch: the smooth, warm eggs, the stiff, plastic flats. The switch to the conveyor belt is firm. It's cool to my fingers as I flip it on and off. Running my hand over the belt, I'm amazed it is smoother than eggshells. I nestle five flats of eggs on top of each other, then lift them up on the cart, aware of weight in my hands.

Unexpectedly, I feel enveloped in a gentle mist of profound gratitude. I am grateful for my body, its ability to touch, move and breathe. I am grateful for my mind, the freedom to believe differently from my husband, for our love, despite our differences. Gratitude and love warm me from within, then radiate outward. I think about the farm cats, foxes and scavenger birds that eat our discarded eggs. I consider the people whose hands will also touch these eggs: the processors, packers, truck drivers, store clerks, cooks. I contemplate all the neighbors, friends and family who use our eggs. I reverently bless each precious life.

As I do, I smile, remembering my reaction to the stink of this place. I notice my tendency to focus on unpleasant areas of my life, the suffering of those I love, my own restlessness and boredom, my negative thoughts and emotions. When I step back from my current problems and become receptive to God, to how I want to be prayerfully present to each moment, there is a beautiful, spacious quality to my life. I notice how rich I am with friendships and opportunities. When I am present and grateful, finding the hidden gifts in each moment, life is full of joy.

When I am present and grateful, finding the hidden gifts in each moment, life is full of joy.

There will always be days when the chicken house fans don't dissipate bad aromas or when personal situations stink. In those moments, if I can behold my whole life, while living moment by moment, I can see incredible beauty. Each moment is precious. My smellier moments teach me as much about myself as my successes do. All life can be embraced as a gift, thus releasing the grace I need for self-knowledge, spiritual growth and abundant life—in the chicken house or in the meadow.

Sharon Clymer Landis lives on a farm with her family in Lititz, Pa., and attends Rossmere Mennonite Church.

Old wine, new songs

Christine Longhurst teaches at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Man. This is reprinted from *Canadian Mennonite*.

Ten years ago, *Christianity Today* carried an article entitled "The Triumph of the Praise Songs: How Guitars Beat Out the Organ in the Worship Wars." Author Michael Hamilton described how contemporary worship music styles were winning out over more traditional hymnody in many congregations.

If anything, some may think the "victory" is even more complete today. Almost every church has broadened the range of music used in worship, combining traditional hymns with music from other sources—praise and worship songs, international songs, music from Taizé and the Iona Community. Some churches have even done away with traditional hymns and hymnals altogether.

This was brought home forcefully to me a few years ago when I taught a course in hymnology at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. The class of 33 students included people from a variety of denominational backgrounds and worshiping traditions. One day I made reference to the hymn "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy," (*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 145) written by Frederick Faber and first published in 1854. I asked the students how many of them knew the hymn. To my surprise, only three put up their hands.

Other hymns didn't fare much better. Isaac Watts' "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" was only slightly better known. In fact, apart from a few well-used hymns such as "Holy, Holy, Holy," "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," "Amazing Grace," "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" and "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," many in the class knew few traditional hymns.

So is traditional hymnody on the way out? Is the whole repertoire of historic worship music gradually disappearing from the worship of many congregations? Is it no longer relevant in many worshiping communities? Ten years ago, I might have been tempted to say yes. Today, though, my answer is the opposite. Not only is hymnody not on the way out, it seems to be making something of a comeback—even in congregations unaccustomed to singing hymns.

It seems a new generation of contemporary Christian songwriters has discovered hymnody. Some of these songwriters are updating traditional hymn settings to make them more appealing to churches unused to traditional hymn styles. These new versions often retain traditional hymn melodies but update them with contemporary rhythm and harmonization; many also include a newly composed refrain. I would love to be able to use examples from the recent Mennonite hymnals *Sing the Journey* or *Sing the Story*, but songs reflecting the trend I'm describing haven't found their way into Mennonite songbooks yet.

Among the better-known composers doing this is Chris Tomlin, who has crafted updated settings of hymns such as "Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)," "The Wondrous Cross (When I Survey)," "Take My Life," "O Worship the King" and others.

Other songwriters, notably Stuart Townend and Keith Getty, are writing brand new hymn texts and setting them to singable contemporary tunes. The goal, says Getty, is "to try and create a more timeless musical style that every generation can sing, a style that relates to the past and the future." Many churches have added "In Christ Alone," "How Deep the Father's Love for Us," "Beautiful Saviour (All My Days)" and others to their repertoire.

Still other songwriters are composing completely new musical settings for traditional hymn texts. Vikki Cook's new setting of Christie Bancroft's "Before the Throne of God Above," first penned in the mid-19th century, is used in many congregations. Ian Hannah, a songwriter from Ireland, has given traditional hymn texts such as "Now Thank We All Our God" and "O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus" new musical settings. The Reformed University Fellowship Online Hymn Resource encourages the practice of writing new music for traditional hymn texts and even makes these new settings available for churches to explore and use.

Granted, many of these new settings may look and sound different from the musical style of the hymns many of us grew up with. But the practice of adapting traditional texts to contemporary musical expressions has a long and rich history in Christian worship. As the Reformed University Fellowship Web site observes: "We have been thrilled to see a movement gaining momentum—a movement to help the church recover the tradition of putting old hymns to new music for each generation and to enrich our worship with a huge view of God and his indelible grace."

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **What's going on in Columbus?**—Anna Groff

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of *The Mennonite*, the board for The Mennonite, Inc., or Mennonite Church USA.

EB addresses antiracism, transition plans

Byler to be acting executive director Aug. 1; Schrag to begin writing project.

The Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (EB), meeting April 16-18 in Rochester, N.Y., spent extra time learning about antiracism and focused on some ways to address it. The board also named associate executive director Ron Byler acting executive director, beginning Aug. 1. Executive director Jim Schrag, who plans to retire Nov. 30, will work on a writing project from Aug. 1 to Nov. 30.

EB members and some Mennonite Church USA staff members spent the afternoon of April 16 in antiracism training. Led by Iris de León Hartshorn, director of intercultural relations for Executive Leadership, and EB member Addie Banks, the training involved role play and case studies.

Participants spoke positively about the exercise. Glen Guyton said, "We have moved to a new level of comfort."

On April 17, EB members discussed an "ends review" of antiracism, one of the four priorities of the denomination.

One part of that review included a recommendation that came out of a meeting in February of leaders from the African-American Mennonite Association, Iglesia Menonita Hispana, Native Mennonite Ministries and the Intercultural Reference Committee.

The group recommended that (1) a restorative justice approach be used in a series of actions, (2) churchwide boards provide funds for racial-ethnic board members to travel to meet annually with their respective racial-ethnic constituency groups, (3) translation of materials be made about churchwide decisions and theology for first-generation immigrants, (4) efforts be made to connect existing groups carrying agenda of racial-ethnic people. The estimated costs for such actions, reported de León Hartshorn, are around $38,000.

EB members asked, Where will the funding and staff time come from to carry out these recommendations?

And Dave Boshart of the EB's future church committee, which carried out the review, noted that a half-day training had not been given for the (three) other priorities.

Moderator-elect Ed Diller noted that some charge that focusing on racial-ethnic concerns ignores "the core." But this is focusing on the core, he said. Byler added, "This is the first ends report we got right."

The board heard reports from agency directors about how their agencies are working at antiracism.

Banks said that racial-ethnic people have particular needs in the areas of economics, education and literacy. "We need to seek more economic justice," she said.

Naming Byler acting executive director came out of a closed session of EB. Schrag said he plans to write about the formation of Mennonite Church USA from two denominations—the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church—from around 1983 until the present.

Meanwhile, the search for a new executive director continues. The board approved a job description—to be posted on the Mennonite Church USA Web site—that includes essential qualifications and desirable gifts or abilities. The search committee reported that 71 names had been suggested thus far.

EB members responded positively to a proposal from the Constituency Leaders Council for a leaders forum to be held each year in lieu of a CLC meeting (see April 21, page 19).

At each meeting, EB members meet with conference leaders from the area where they meet. On April 17, six leaders from New York Mennonite Conference talked about the issues they face and said they feel on the fringe of the denomination. Conference moderator Terry Zehr said he especially longed for visits from denominational leaders.

"We know what you write, but we don't know who you are," he said.

We know what you write, but we don't know who you are.
—Terry Zehr

The next day, EB members talked about the conversation with New York Conference. Patty Shelly said that Zehr's words rang in her ears, and she wondered if EB should rethink its meeting with "owners."

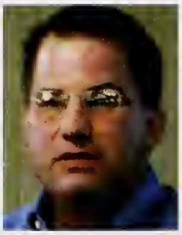
In other business, the board:

- received a report by Yvonne Diaz on a churchwide Spanish translation initiative;
- discussed Mennonite Church USA's relationship with Mennonite Central Committee;
- heard a report from a task force on *The Mennonite;*
- heard a report from LaVern Yutzy, consultant on churchwide operations and alignment;
- heard from young adult observer Lydell Steiner of Kidron, Ohio, who encouraged EB members to "do something uncomfortable."

—Gordon Houser

Kanagy encourages missional journey

More than 100 participate in Road Signs for the Church Journey conference.



Conrad Kanagy

The mission of God must be our first priority, or we will never get around to do it, said Conrad Kanagy, keynote speaker at the "From Reality to Hope: Road Signs for the Church Journey" conference March 20-21 at a campus of the South Hutchinson (Kan.) Mennonite Church.

"All the other things we get caught up in are about taking care of us, and our needs are endless," said Kanagy. "If we're not clear about our congregation's calling as the people of God to the community where we're located, we're going to get distracted by other people along the road."

More than 100 people participated in the conference, sponsored jointly by Hesston (Kan.) College, South Central Mennonite Conference and the South Hutchinson Mennonite Church.

Kanagy is the author of the book *Road Signs for the Journey: A Profile of Mennonite Church USA*. Written in 2006, the book includes a survey of Mennonite Church USA members that Kanagy used to provide spiritual and sociological markers of Mennonite Church USA today. He notes changes since surveys of Mennonites in 1972 and 1989, and compares the denomination with other U.S. faith traditions. Kanagy's pastoral and missional perspective points to signs of hope and renewal. Kanagy teaches at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College.

The fatigue we're feeling in the church today is from serving ourselves. —Conrad Kanagy

Kanagy spoke on four themes: "The Reality of God's People Today," "A Theological Perspective," "A Missional Response" and "Moving Forward in Hope to Shape New Realities."

"The church's journey must be a missional journey," said Kanagy. "A common question today is, How do we get people into the church? A better question may be, How do we get the church into the community?

"Power, acceptance and prestige are the ways of the church today," he said. "That's why we're so busy doing church; we're not really involved in ministry. How can the church be rebuilt and restored so it becomes what God intended it to be?"

Kanagy told a personal story of his wife being diagnosed with cancer a year ago. Previous to that, they walked a fast, three-mile track for their daily exercise and didn't have time to talk to the people they met along the way. Last summer, that fast pace was reduced to a painful walk around the block, and suddenly they found themselves interacting with their neighbors as folks are coming out of their houses to connect with them.

"In our weakness, we can do so much more for God than in our strength," Conrad said.

Using Jeremiah 31:21a as the theme verse, Kanagy urged attendees to "Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take. We are not immune to the trends that are taking place in North America, and most of the landscape we live in is changing. We should not fight it. We must trust that it will end in the fulfillment of God's kingdom."

"Is the Spirit of God dismantling the church as we know it?" he asked. "How can we work with the Spirit of God instead of against it? We have an incredible opportunity to get on with the mission of God in the midst of the dismantling of the church. When we focus on the mission of God, we will move forward in unity, and our differences will become secondary. When we focus on our differences, the church becomes fragmented. What would happen if every committee and ministry team would ask the question, How is the work we are doing connected to the mission of God?"

Conrad concluded with this statement: "If missional work doesn't change us, it's not missional work, because God's mission is not about us. The fatigue we're feeling in the church today is from serving ourselves. Folks that get on with the mission of God have found life. What evidence to God's love do our congregations demonstrate?"

At the end of the conference, Ted & Company performed their new stage production, "WWLD?" (What Would Lloyd Do?), starring Ted Swartz and Trent Wagler with Jay Lapp.

The show portrays a struggling inner-city church that recruits a new pastor and music director. Coming from different generations the two discover conflict and commonality. As their relationship grows, they wrestle with issues of doubt, disappointment and hope. The show is a blend of original music, humor and a thought-provoking message. For more information about the show, go to www.tedandlee.com.

"This is an important topic for all churches in Mennonite Church USA," said Hutchinson pastor Howard Wagler, "to have conversations about our present reality and hope for the future. We highly recommend the content presented by Conrad Kanagy and Ted & Company to help us see where we are as a church, presenting a message of hope and helping us find the way by providing road signs pointing us to a brighter future."—*Judy King*

Good Friday vigil challenges air strikes

Twenty Mennonites, Catholics, Quakers gather at an Air Force base in Idaho.

A Good Friday vigil held at the gates of Mountain Home Air Force Base April 10 was the first peace witness since the Vietnam War to be held at this key launch point for U.S. global air strikes.

Supersonic F-15E jets from Mountain Home Air Force Base (AFB), located in the high desert some 50 miles southeast of Boise, Idaho, regularly carry out ground-attack missions in Afghanistan, where last year more than 500 civilian men, women and children were killed by U.S. air strikes against tribal villages suspected of harboring insurgents.

A stream of cars entering and leaving the base slowed down to view the vigil, where a plain wooden cross and several signs were held by about 20 people from Mennonite, Catholic and Quaker congregations in southern Idaho.

The vigil was intended by its organizers to help spark church and community action at facilities across the country, to challenge the escalating war in Afghanistan, Pakistan and other areas of Southwest Asia.

Vigil participants had the opportunity to discuss the religious and social issues of war and nonviolence with some base residents or employees who disagreed with the peace witness.

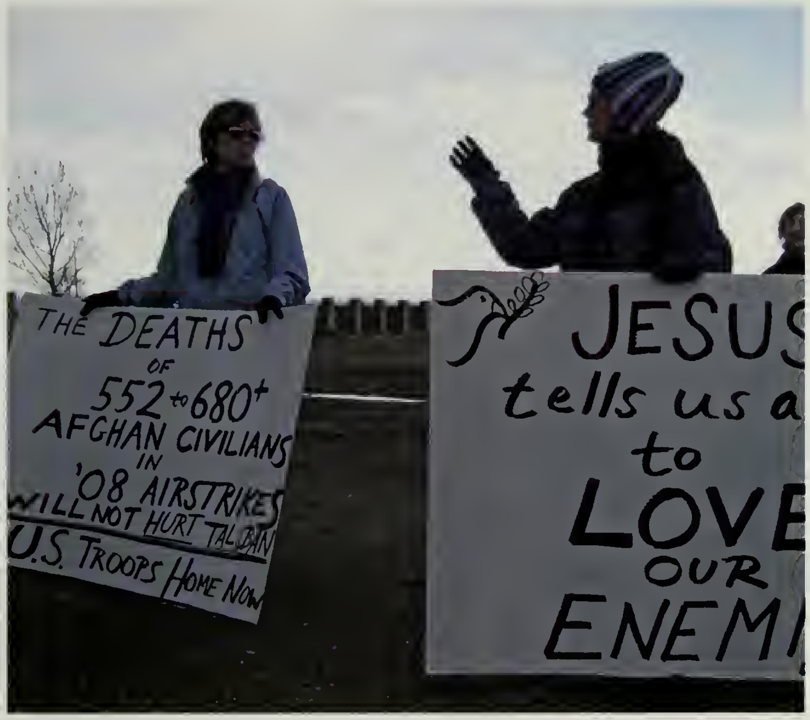
"I felt at peace during the vigil," said Tamara Masarik, a member of St. Mark's social justice committee in Boise. "I prayed for those coming and going through the gates that they, too, might find peace."

Plainclothes military police, unable to prevent the gathering on public-access Bureau of Land Management terrain just outside the base's formidable black steel fence line, warned vigilers not to take pictures with the base in the background —though they could cite no law that forbade such photography.

Signs and banners that vigil participants held for some three and a half hours near the wooden cross, included ones that read: "Jesus tells us all to love our enemies (Luke 6:27)," "The deaths of 552 to 680 Afghan civilians in '08 air strikes will not hurt the Taliban," "Bring U.S. troops home now" and "Pray for peace, act for peace."

Some members of Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship in Boise initiated the vigil, joined by members of Saint Mark's Catholic community and Quakers from Boise Friends Meeting. Organizers in the Idaho chapters of Veterans for Peace and of Iraq Veterans Against the War expressed their support for the vigil.

The vigil was intended to begin a process of contemplation and continuing action in southern Idaho and across the country, to challenge the deadly air strikes on Afghan villages and rural areas.



Leonard Nolt

Pam Piper-Ruth (left), a member of Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship, Boise, talks to Tamara Masarik, member of Saint Mark's Catholic Church, Boise, during the peace vigil at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho, April 10.

Mountain Home AFB has been a significant part of the U.S. air wars in Vietnam, Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan. One of the first "GI coffeehouses" for troops questioning or opposing the Vietnam War was started in the town of Mountain Home.

In 1999, Mountain Home AFB's 391st Expeditionary Squadron dropped more bombs on Iraq than any other military unit to that date since the end of Operation Desert Storm.

During the first year of American air strikes in Afghanistan, Mountain Home's planes dropped more bombs on that country than any other unit of the U.S. military.

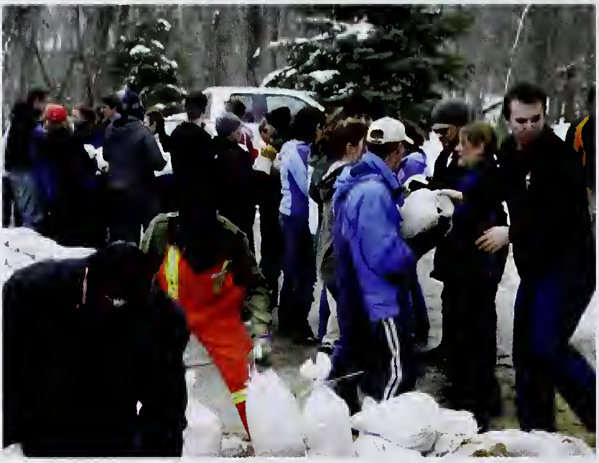
On April 7, three days before the Good Friday vigil, the *New York Times* included information that the U.S. government is planning to intensify the drone attacks on Pakistani villages in the weeks and months ahead, despite the opposition of even the U.S.-supported Pakistani government to such attacks.

If current policies go forward, with 20,000 to 30,000 additional U.S. troops being readied for deployment to Afghanistan, Mountain Home's nuclear-capable warplanes will play a key role in the government's officially announced escalation of the war.—*Peter Lumsdaine, interim co-pastor at Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship, Boise, Idaho*

Editor's note: Peter Lumsdaine's sources for this article include U.S. military Web sites, Global-Security.org, Wikipedia articles and the Center for Defense Information. His email address is megl2008@live.com.

MDS says the best news is 'temporary'

Mennonite Disaster Service responds to surge of tornadoes, floods and fires.



Canadian Mennonite University

Students of Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Man., help with sandbagging.

The word "temporary" is good news in the context of natural disaster. It gives a conclusion to an unfortunate event. MDS (Mennonite Disaster Service) is currently investigating, coordinating and responding to the recent tornadoes, floods and fires that continue to devastate families and damage homes in Arkansas, North Dakota, Minnesota, Mississippi, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Texas and parts of Canada.

Empowering people is what makes disaster response a reality. —Jerry Klassen

Jerry Klassen, MDS disaster response coordinator, says that more than 60 MDS volunteers traveled from neighboring communities to replace tin roofing on at least six barns in Nashville, Ark. Those impacted by the recent tornadoes in other parts of the United States such as Magee, Miss., and Murfreesboro, Tenn., can be assured that "local MDS folks from the surrounding areas are responding" says Klassen.

Ted Hostetler, MDS volunteer in Arkansas, says that MDS volunteers are going door to door assessing needs. Things are not looking much better in Fargo, N.D.

The Red River continues to pose a great risk for surrounding communities. Wilbur Litwiller, MDS regional director, says authorities expect the river to crest near Fargo upwards of 40 feet.

Litwiller says that MDS volunteers "continue to sandbag and wait to see what the river does, how fast the snow melts and if more rain is expected in the forecast."

MDS volunteers from Minnesota are on standby if more people power is needed in the sandbagging effort. "The greatest threat now is warm weather," says Litwiller.

The Red River flood has made its imprint on Canada as well. Like Fargo, a second crest is expected.

"The Red River and the Assiniboine River, which meet in downtown Winnipeg at the Forks, are expected to crest simultaneously," says Ron and Elaine Enns, MDS Canada region directors. "Many of the houses and farms surrounding the river have become isolated, although they remain dry."

Fifty students from Canadian Mennonite University also assisted in the sandbagging effort. MDS had well over 100 volunteers responding to the Red River flood in Canada. While Fargo, Winnipeg and surrounding areas are dealing with too much water, Oklahoma is dealing with massive fires that continue to spread. Bill Mast, MDS unit area coordinator for Oklahoma, reports that the fires reached within four miles of his house.

"At least 100 homes completely burned to the ground," he says.

Although the investigation is still underway, it looks like the fires are destroying homes mostly in upper-scale neighborhoods where people will most likely have insurance and the resources to rebuild. For now, MDS volunteers are on standby, waiting to see how they can assist in the cleanup effort.

MDS has had the opportunity to sign up and train more Emergency Response Teams. These teams are self-sustained mobile response units that are responsible for the initial cleanup phase for anyone, insured or uninsured.

"The recent ERT trainings have paid great dividends," says Klassen. "Empowering people is what makes disaster response a reality."—*Brian Pipkin for Mennonite Disaster Service*

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Goshen College launches two new SSTs

New Study-Service Term in Latino community in Indiana; new unit in Egypt.

Goshen (Ind.) College is launching two new Study-Service Term (SST) programs: one locally in Goshen and one in Egypt. Starting in the spring of 2010, Goshen students will have the opportunity to study about, serve in and be immersed in the local Latino culture for a semester in northern Indiana, which has seen significant demographic changes in the last 20 years. Minority enrollment in northern Indiana schools—particularly Latino students—has grown dramatically.

"Since the inception of the international education program," says Tom Meyers, director of international education, "there have been conversations about a domestic alternative to our international programs. We believe it is time to develop and implement a new model. We need an immersion experience and direct contact with another culture for students who can't go abroad."

Goshen offers alternative courses for students unable to travel abroad—often due to life circumstances and commitments—to fulfill the SST requirement. Approximately 20 percent of students take these courses.

"Domestic SST will create a space for GC students to listen and learn about what's happening in their backyard regarding cultural issues related to the Latino community," says local Latino community leader Gilberto Perez Jr., the Bienvenido program director for the Northeastern Center in Ligonier, Ind. Perez and the Northeastern Center have assisted the college in connecting with Latino leaders in Elkhart and Noble County.

Students will study Spanish, Latino history, literature and culture, take field trips to Latino communities in such places as Chicago and Indianapolis and serve in local organizations, church programs or schools linked to the Latino community.

Though students will continue to live on campus or at home, they will each connect with a local Latino family on a regular basis during the semester. In other SST locations, students live with host families during both the six weeks of study and the six weeks of service.

Impetus for the development of a domestic SST location came from funding designated in the 2006 Lilly Endowment grant for the Center for Intercultural Teaching and Learning, that was created to serve the educational needs of a rapidly increasing Latino immigrant population.

New unit in Egypt: Starting in the fall of 2010, Egypt will be added as a new SST location, making it the first time that Arabic is the language studied by students on SST.

"Goshen College should be in the Middle East," Meyers says. "It is a very important part of the world and international politics. It is at the heart of so many issues."

Because of sensitivities around gender, students will not live with host families and instead will be housed in apartments or a retreat center. Students will attend a language school in Cairo during the first part of the semester and do service in a variety of locations during the second part of the term.

The addition of Egypt as an SST location means that the summer 2009 unit to Germany will be the last for that location.—*Goshen College*

Mennonite Church USA

Mennonite Church USA Vision:
God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

The Mennonite Church USA Search Committee asks for your prayers for calling a new Executive Director. If you think God might be calling you, read on and inquire. If you think of others who may be good candidates, please encourage them to apply or nominate them yourself.

We are seeking a dynamic Executive Director to lead Mennonite Church USA toward a Christ-centered spirituality and missional witness. The Executive Director, who is the chief executive officer and primary public spokesperson of the denomination, will inspire Mennonite Church USA through a compelling articulation of the vision, mission and priorities of the church. She/he will lead a team of staff to help bring alignment and synergy to the mission of agencies, executive staff functions and area conferences. A more complete job description may be viewed at www.MennoniteUSA.org/edsearch. Please send qualifications and/or questions to J. Richard Thomas at 2176 Lincoln Highway East, Lancaster, PA, 17602, by e-mail at thomasjr@lancaster-mennonite.org or by fax to (717) 299-0823. Responses should be received by April 30, 2009.

Individuals bringing diversity are encouraged to apply. Mennonite Church USA is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Mennonite Church USA conducts background investigations as part of the hiring process, and complies with federal and state requirements for non-discrimination in employment with regard to sex, age, race, color, disability and national and ethnic origin.

Pastors should tend their flocks, not their health bills

As many as 100 pastors in Mennonite Church USA have little or no health care coverage. Together, we can do something about this crisis.

The Corinthian Plan is a new employee benefit program for Mennonite Church USA congregations. It can ensure that all pastors and church staff have access to health coverage and other benefits, regardless of their congregations' financial situations.

Congregations have until Oct. 1, 2009, to decide whether to participate. Don't delay. Visit **www.CorinthianPlan.com**

The Corinthian Plan
Together, providing health care for pastors and church workers

Juanita and Eligio Nuñez, co-pastors of Ebenezer Christian Church, Apopka, Fla. Neither Juanita nor Eligio have health insurance.

Mennonite Church USA

Partnership serves octopus fishermen

Argentine "pulperos" fighting to stay on the beach as luxury hotels move in.

Elizabeth Nachtigall

Two members of Choele Choel Mennonite Church, Luis Diaz and Rueben Cariman, survey the first day's work on the bathroom they helped build for the pulperos on Las Grutas beach in Argentina.

For one Argentine group, mission involved making a dirty job cleaner, Elizabeth Nachtigall discovered during an apprenticeship with Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Argentina (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Argentina).

Las Grutas beach on the Argentine coast was home to pulperos (octopus fishermen) long before it became a vacation spot for the rich. Now, however, the shelters of corrugated tin and other recycled materials are overshadowed by large hotels, and a dispute has arisen over property rights.

In conversation with the pulperos, an eight-member mission team led by Mennonites from Choele Choel Mennonite Church discovered that the construction of a bathroom with a shower, sink and toilet would serve the community.

"Not only is this a practical way to show Christ's love but a way in which the pulperos know we care and want to establish friendships with them," says Nachtigall. On March 17, Nachtigall, a Mennonite Mission Network intern from Hopedale, Ill., began the study component of the Seminario Intensivo Misionero (Intensive Mission Seminar). Juan Domingo and Toti, two of the pulperos, spoke of their years lived by the sea. They have nowhere else to go if the hotel owners force them to move off the beach."They see no way out. Or perhaps to get out might be too painful," Nachtigall says.

The mission seminar prepares church members for ministry through a three-pronged approach: participation in Choele Choel's congregational life, classes and monthly mission trips. Classes are taught by Juan Sieber, Argentine church leader, and Delbert and Frieda Schellenberg Erb, former Mennonite Board of Missions workers, who have retired in Choele Choel.

Current seminar participants are Nachtigall, six members of the Choele Choel congregation—Ezequiel Diaz, José Luis Rojas, Laura Vaugniaux de Rojas, Oscar Lorenzi, Lucia Trancamilla de Lorenzi, Alicia Rodriguez de Formiga—and Jacob Good of East Bend Mennonite Church in Fisher, Ill., an Arm in Arm congregation.

Nachtigall is part of a two-way mission exchange between Mennonites in Argentina and Illinois Mennonite Conference congregations that dates to the mid-1990s. The Patagonia Mission Project emerged from congregations in Argentina's Patagonia region desiring co-workers to help them realize their call to mission. A cluster of Illinois congregations and individuals responded through a partnership called Arm in Arm that brought them together with the Patagonia congregations and Mennonite Mission Network. This partnership develops new churches and renews existing churches in Patagonia and Illinois.

The Patagonia Mission Project commissioned 12 mission workers for church planting in their own country and in neighboring Chile. The project also sends Argentine church leaders, like the family of Amaris and Juan Sieber, to help Illinois congregations reach beyond their comfort zones. This has led to the development of the Southern Illinois Mission Partnership that is beginning a new church in Mt. Vernon, Ill. where the Crossroads Christian Center serves as a base for mission to surrounding communities.

Elizabeth's parents, Karen and Ray Nachtigall, are providing leadership to mission teams making contacts for other potential locations for congregations throughout the southern Illinois region.

—Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mennonite Mission Network

"Distance learning classes at EMS create community with finger-tips instead of faces. Pastoral care leaks out of the computer when students share their hearts and people pray."

Becky Hess
MDiv student, Lancaster Pa.

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Conference builds trust among Somalis

Muslims and Christians share what they appreciate about each other.

Dave Robinson

Sheikh Mohamed Abdillahi Omar thanks David Shenk, left, for a Somali primer on peacemaking.

Even as Somali pirates terrorized key shipping lanes bordering their coastline, Muslim and Christian peacemakers gathered nearby for negotiations of a different sort.

In a conference facilitated by World Vision, Feb.1-3, 2009, 30 international and Somali humanitarian aid leaders met in Hargeisa, Somaliland, to explore the faith foundations that form their respective commitments. The international attendees were Christians, and the local attendees were Muslim.

Badru Kateregga, president of the University of Kampala, and David Shenk, a global consultant with Eastern Mennonite Missions, were invited to be conference facilitators.

Thirty years ago, Kateregga and Shenk co-authored *A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue.* Their engagement in the Hargeisa gathering was a further step in their journey as friends who bear witness to their respective faiths in a spirit of respectful encounter.

One of the poignant moments in the Hargeisa meeting was when Shenk and Kateregga shared the pain of dialogue that they personally experience in their relationship with one another.

As they shared it was evident that although dialogue contributes to respectful understanding, it does not erase the different faith centers that form the Muslim and Christian communities.

As these two friends, a Muslim and a Christian, modeled dialogue, the group began to share with one another the faith foundations that form their commitments to compassionate service, something they had hesitated to do before, although they work and serve together.

A moment of transformation came when the Christians shared with their Muslim colleagues what they appreciate about them, and when the Muslims, in turn, shared their love and appreciation for the Christians with whom they serve.

"It was a modest step in trust-building in a region where the walls that separate have become quite formidable," Shenk said.

The concluding dinner with 35 local Muslim sheikhs from Hargeisa was another highlight of the gathering.

In after-dinner remarks, Shenk told the sheikhs that he represents the Mennonite church, which has a more than 50-year history of engagement in Somalia and is a community committed to the compassion and peace of Christ.

Shenk also gave each sheikh a copy of a Somali primer with narratives on peacemaking. The primer had been developed by Somalis in a writing project facilitated by Mennonites. Shenk said the sheikhs were delighted with the gift and invited strengthened commitments to peacemaking and dialogue endeavors.

He is also hearing reports of how the Hargeisa gathering is encouraging similar conversations in the various locations to which seminar participants have scattered.—*Jewel Showalter of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

Vice President of Lending

Mennonite Financial Federal Credit Union is seeking a vice president of lending to plan, organize, and direct its consumer, real estate, and business lending activities, and participate in establishing and implementing major goals and strategic objectives. The position is located in Lancaster, Pa. Qualified candidates will have executive-level experience in lending, negotiations, decision making, and business strategy planning.

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Friends of the Wolof begins new chapter

No North American FOW workers in Senegal for the first time in a decade.

Stan Farmwald

The Wolof leader of the followers of Jesus, (center left) meets with village elders.

On Jan. 31, Friends of the Wolof celebrated an ending and a beginning. At their annual banquet held at Silverwood Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., there were no North American FOW workers in Senegal for the first time in a decade.

The three families who launched the FOW ministry among the Wolof people are now living in the United States. The Wolof leader Ibu* spoke to those at the banquet by cell phone from Senegal.

In 1995, FOW began building a partnership that grew and now includes Wolof followers of Jesus. Now FOW is pioneering new territory—how to be trans-Atlantic brothers and sisters.

"It would be tempting at this juncture in FOW's ministry to say, 'Mission accomplished,'" said Charles Buller, FOW director. "There is a small nucleus of believers who have professed faith in Jesus and who want to share the good news with other Wolof people." However, Buller stressed the importance of continuing to walk alongside the Wolof followers of Jesus, a new community of faith radically at odds with its cultural and religious environment.

Also, Wolof believers can serve as guides to their North American counterparts through the confusion of a shifting economic reality that has imposed financial limitations on the partnership.

"While the Wolof people may not be able to send us money, they are showing us what it means to follow Jesus when it is unpopular and costly," Buller said.

If FOW backs away from ministry now that their North American personnel no longer reside in the country, Buller said, the Senegalese will understand the years of conversation about God's global family as empty words rather than the life-changing truth.

Buller said going beyond what is convenient and safe and giving when it means putting aside personal interest or gain—these are ways of modeling who God is.

Practical ways that FOW will continue to demonstrate Jesus' friendship to the Wolof include:

- **Intercession:** FOW plans to maintain frequent communication with Ibu and Margaret De Jong of Mennonite Mission Network, who serves in Senegal.
- **Financial support:** FOW will contribute to Ibu's family support so that he and his wife, Yacine, can engage in full-time ministry.
- **Advocacy:** FOW will work with organizations in Senegal to find creative employment opportunities for Wolof Christians.
- **Supervision:** Buller will continue to serve as FOW director in collaboration with Mennonite Mission Network.

LifeSpring Community Church, Goshen, led the way in developing the FOW partnership, mobilizing a support network to send personnel to Senegal to build relationships with the Wolof people, who have a deeply rooted suspicion of the Christian message due to centuries of religious antagonism and persecution. FOW workers were surprised to find Ibu, a follower of Jesus, waiting for them. Within the first year, Ibu was baptized and brought five friends to faith in Jesus. Ibu and Yacine are supported by FOW, Mennonite Mission Network and Pioneers through Mission Inter Senegal. Pioneers and MIS are both Mission Network partner agencies.—*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mennonite Mission Network*

*Ibu is a pseudonym

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CALENDAR

Lancaster Mennonite School will host the ***Middle School Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) Choir Festival*** on May 8, culminating with a public concert at 7 p.m. in the school's Fine Arts Center at 2176 Lincoln Highway East. Everyone is welcome. An offering will be received in lieu of an admission fee.

Lancaster Mennonite School will hold a ***Spring Open House*** May 17 from 1-3 p.m. for parents and students in the Alumni Dining Hall of Lancaster Campus at 2176 Lincoln Highway East. For more information call 717-299-0436, ext. 312.

WORKERS

Adams, Sam, was ordained as pastor at The River Mennonite Church, Bend, Ore., on April 5.

Larson, Jonathan, was installed as intentional interim pastor at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind., on April 5.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Bigham, Eli James, April 8, to Daniel and Meredith Berg Bigham, Kitchener, Ontario.

Chodos, Samuel Robert Krahn, March 30, to Dave Chodos and Natasha Krahn, Waterloo, Ontario.

Cornies, Henry Wallace, April 5, to Ron and Karen Cornies, Waterloo, Ontario.

Dugan, Josiah Edward, Jan. 26, to David Martin and Mary Jantzi Dugan, Morris, N.Y.

Gouldey, Tyson Rader, April 1, to Michael and Kalyn Gerber Gouldey, Souderton, Pa.

Nicolson, Nadine Ruth, April 2, to Lillian Haas and Norman Nicolson, Orodara, Burkina Faso.

Rolon, Analiese Michelle, April 1, to Miguel and Sade Atkins Rolon, Columbus, Ohio.

Simington, Lucy Joy, April 6, to Joe and Rachel Rensink Simington, Spirit Lake, Iowa.

Thorn, Caden Russell, April 6, to Russell and Jeanelle Linder Thorn, Alliance, Ohio.

Waltner, Allegra Grace, March 25, to Ryan and Sarah Rensink Waltner, Sioux Falls, S.D.

MARRIAGES

Freeman/Wills: Kim Freeman, Guelph, Ontario, and John Wills, Guelph, March 14, at Grey Silo Golf Course, Waterloo, Ontario.

Gusler/Roggie: Todd Gusler, Goshen, Ind., and Leah Roggie, Goshen, March 28, at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

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2009 TOURS

EXPLORE the WORLD of PAUL with TOM YODER NEUFELD (April 29-May 15)
ISRAEL and PALESTINE (May 24-June 3)
GREAT TREK TOUR 2009 (May 24-June 4)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE TOUR (June 4-17)
RUSSIA and UKRAINE (June 5-18)
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (June 8-20)
MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE TOURS (July) - A Few Seats Available
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN SHARP (July 31-August 13)
MEDA IN UKRAINE (September 3-13)
ENCHANTING DANUBE RIVER CRUISE (October 24-November 1)
JAMAICA HIGHLIGHTS TOUR (November 13-22)
BEHIND the VEIL - EXPERIENCING EGYPT (November 16-28)

2010 TOURS

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 5-25)
WITH OBERAMMERGAU PASSION PLAY:
SPRINGTIME in HOLLAND, BELGIUM & GERMANY (May 6-17)
LUTHERAN HOLY LAND TOUR (May 8-19)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (June 1-14)
SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA & ITS FJORDS (June 13-28)
PENNSYLVANIA to EUROPE (June 19-July 2)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE (June 24-July 5)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN SHARP (June 29-July 12)
ITALY, AUSTRIA & GERMANY (July 7-17)
ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (July 23-August 4)
SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29-August 11)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (September 5-18)
THE ROAD to JERUSALEM (September 11-22)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE for GERMAN-SPEAKING PERSONS (September 16-29)
TM MYSTERY TOUR (October 15-23)

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DEATHS

Brubaker, Ezra Garber, 99, Lititz, Pa., died April 4. Spouse: Esther Shenk Brubaker (deceased). Parents: Jacob S. and Anna Mae Garber Brubaker. Children: Charles S., Glenn S., Richard S.; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 9 at Landis Valley Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

Friesen, Jacob D., 97, Inman, Kan., died March 29. Spouse: Hilda Marie Neufeld Friesen (deceased). Parents: Dietrich and Maria Wiens Friesen. Children: Ronald Lee; three grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 2 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

Friesen, John Albert, 93, Goshen, Ind., died March 30. Spouse: Genevieve Yoder Friesen (deceased). Parents: Peter Abram and Helena Heibert Friesen. Children: J. Stanley, G. Weldon, C. Richard, G. Delbert, D. William; eight grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 28 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Halteman, Elizabeth "Lizzie" Moyer, 90, March 19. Parents: Elmer Shatz and Mary Moyer Halteman. Funeral: March 28 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

Harnish, Marlin S., 60, Lancaster, Pa., died March 7. Spouse: Ruth A. Mellinger Harnish. Parents: J. Mylin and Frances Siegrist Harnish. Children: Alan, Anita, Jennifer. Funeral: March 14 at Habecker Mennonite Church, Lancaster.

Heatwole, Carol Goshow, 58, Harrisonburg, Va., died April 10. Spouse: Leo E. Heatwole. Parents: Henry M. and Irene S. Keller Goshow. Children: Carmen Miller, Christy Kauffman; three grandchildren. Funeral: April 13 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Hostetler, Katherine Penner, 84, Akron, Pa., died March 28. Spouse: John D. Hostetler. Children: Robert J., Richard D.; three grandchildren. Funeral: April 4 at Akron Mennonite Church.

Kauffman, Rachel Kolb Clemmer, 70, Alto, Mich., died March 24. Spouse: Marlin Kauffman. Parents: Markley and Miriam Clemmer. Children: Karl, Jeff, Karen Stoltzfus; five grandchildren. Funeral: March 28 at Bowne Mennonite Church, Clarkville, Mich.

Kissell, Richard M., 87, York, Pa., died March 12. Spouse: Novelda Thomas Kissell. Parents: Ralph and Agnes Livingston Kissell. Children: Kathleen Crum, Girven, Barbara Scott, Rebecca Richards; nine grandchildren. Memorial service: April 11 at Carpenter Park Mennonite Church, Davidsville, Pa.

"For the Record" is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. To submit information, log on to www.TheMennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access our online forms. You can also submit information by email, fax or mail:

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- fax 574-535-6050
- 1700 S. Main St.,
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  46526-4794

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

Leaman, Elizabeth M. Hershey, 98, Lititz, Pa., died Jan. 24. Spouse: Daniel D. Leaman (deceased). Parents: Martin R. and Susan Eby Hershey. Children: Hershey, Evelyn Sweigart, Elizabeth Lehman, Marie Shenk, James; 13 grandchildren; 30 great-grandchildren; four great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 28 at Landis Homes West Bethany Chapel, Lititz.

Becker, Melvin D., 82, Moundridge, Kan., died April 2. Spouse: Carolyn Goering Becker (deceased). Parents: Abram J.C. and Lizzie Becker Becker. Child: Sandy Peer. Funeral: April 6 at First Mennonite Church, McPherson, Kan.

Geib, Ruth S. Shenk, 87, Lititz, Pa., died March 28. Spouse: Paul S. Geib (deceased). Parents: Benjamin H. and Ella Z. Erb Shenk. Step-children: Donald S., Paul Eugene, Linda Lou Radle; two step-grandchildren; two step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 2 at Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa.

Mast, Ralph E., 88, Goshen, Ind., died April 10. Spouse: Ellen Rose Martin Mast. Parents: Elijah and Ella Good Mast. Children: Linda Farmwald, Alice Jane Gesse; six grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 14 at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Kouts, Ind.

Miller, Viola, 86, Springs, Pa., died April 6. Parents: Norman and Suie Hershberger Miller. Funeral: April 8 at Springs Mennonite Church.

Moyer, Leroy Bishop, 83, Line Lexington, Pa., died April 16 of Parkinson's disease. Spouse: Anna Mary Prentice Moyer. Parents: Harvey Swartley and Tillie Bergey Bishop Moyer. Children: Carol A. Hilbert, Alan L., David R., Robert B.; three grandchildren. Funeral: April 20 at Zion Mennonite Church, Souderton, Pa.

Nice, Aaron D., 99, Morrison, Ill., died March 31. Spouse: Barbara May Yoder Nice (deceased). Parents: Abner A. and Esther Deter Nice. Children: Ruth Carrasco, Richard, David, John, LeRoy; 13 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 4 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling, Ill.

Raber, John Henry, 71, Sarasota, Fla., died April 12 of cancer. Spouse: Ann Stutzman Raber. Children: Todd, Lisa Teague, Tonya Herschberger; seven grandchildren. Funeral: April 18 at Bay Shore Mennonite Church, Sarasota.

Richard, Eunice Marie Amstutz, 82, Creston, Ohio, died March 24 of cancer. Spouse: Elmer J. Richard. Parents: Elmer J. and Etta M. Steiner Amstutz. Children: Phil, Sidney, Kristina Gerber, Kent; seven grandchildren. Funeral: March 30 at Crown Hill Mennonite Church, Rittman, Ohio.

Roberts, Roy Charles, 95, Harrisonburg, Va., died March 27. Spouse: Naomi J. Yoder Roberts. Parents: Charles and Ella Moore Roberts. Children: Rebecca Scott-Mitchell, Sarah Holmes; four grandchildren. Funeral: April 18 at Cedar Grove United Methodist Church Cemetery, Rockingham County, Va.

Schrock. Noland J., 87, Sugarcreek, Ohio, died April 2. Spouse: Audrey L. Stevenson Schrock (deceased). Spouse: Daisy Alwine Schrock (deceased). Parents: Nathan and Masa Hershberger Schrock. Child: Jeffrey; two grandchildren. Funeral: April 4 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church, Walnut Creek, Ohio.

Snyder, Lester Edison, 93, Orrville, Ohio, died March 13. Spouse: Nellie Jane Herman Snyder (deceased). Parents: Orrville and Ellen Hartzler Snyder. Children: Randall, Jane Vendrely; two grandchildren. Funeral: March 18 at Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio.

Swartzendruber, Mark P., 87, Kalona, Iowa, died April 14. Spouse: Doris Marner Swartzendruber. Children: Linwood, Mary Lou Farmer; two grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 17 at Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church, Kalona.

Weaver, Evelyn Janette Bender, 89, Wellman, Iowa, died March 10 following a lengthy illness. Spouse: Tillman M. Weaver (deceased). Parents: Joseph and Salena Shetler Bender. Children: Linton, Elaine Hochstedler; three grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 12 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa.

Trauger, Florence W. Willouer, 92, Souderton, Pa., died April 9. Spouse: Norman O. Trauger (deceased). Parents: Henry L. and Alice B. Minninger Willouer. Children: Norman, Jr., Richard, Eugene, George, Vernon; 10 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 13 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Yoder, Luke D., 79, Pigeon, Mich., died April 4 of ALS. Spouse: Cora Mae Maust Yoder. Parents: Samuel and Savilla Bender Yoder. Children: Merlin, Gloria Diener, Darrel, Dale; 11 grandchildren. Funeral: April 8 at Pigeon River Mennonite Church, Pigeon.

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Goshen College seeks ***director of a new Latino Studies Semester initiative*** to begin July 1, 2009. Responsibilities include the organization of study and service learning programs in the Latino communities of Northern Indiana. Ph.D. preferred, master's required. Bilingual in Spanish/English required. Teaching and administrative experience desired. Must demonstrate ability to establish partnerships in the local Latino community. To apply, see the position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment. Goshen College, an affirmative action employer, is a liberal arts institution affiliated with Mennonite Church USA.

Dorm leaders. Ten-month full-time voluntary service position. ***Western Mennonite School*** seeks both male and female candidates to serve as dorm leaders for its high school dorm program. Experience working with youth preferred. Responsibilities include mentoring students, enforcing rules, planning and supervising activities. Candidates must be willing to work with students from other cultures, promote a positive Christ-centered community and be willing to work flexible hours. Applications accepted until positions filled. These voluntary service positions include a monthly stipend and medical and car insurance. Contact Zig Derochowski at 503-363-2000 or 866-343-9378 or zderochowski@westernmennoniteschool.org. Western offers an exceptional, Christ-centered education for grades 6-12 and is located on 45 beautiful acres within the Willamette Valley of the Pacific Northwest.

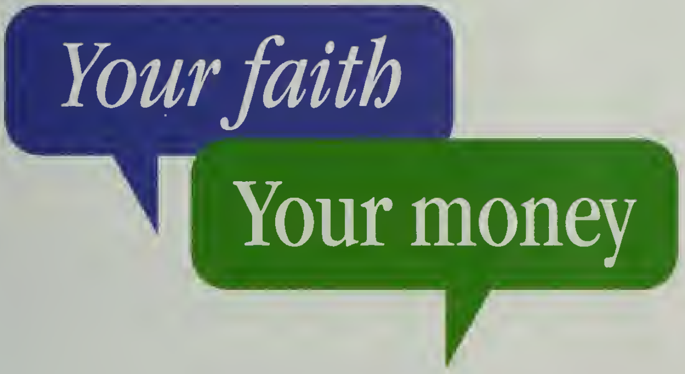
Goshen College seeks applicants for a ***full-time nursing faculty member*** to teach psychiatric/mental health nursing courses in the classroom and clinical setting. The ideal candidate will bring significant experience in nursing practice and nursing education. Doctorate in nursing or doctoral candidate preferred, master's degree in nursing required. For further details and to apply, see the position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment. Goshen College, an affirmative action employer, is a liberal arts institution affiliated with Mennonite Church USA.

Greeley Mennonite Church in beautiful northern Colorado desires candidates for the position of ***full-time lead pastor***. We seek a dedicated Anabaptist to provide spiritual and church growth leadership (as a friend, listener and teacher) and thoughtful sermons for our warm congregation of 60+ members. Salary provided in accordance with Mennonite Church USA guidelines. Contact Herm Weaver at 303-895-0801; herm@MountainStatesMC.org.

Highland Retreat in Bergton, Va., is seeking candidates for the position of ***executive director*** to begin in or near December 2009. Nestled in the mountains of western Virginia, Highland offers many outdoor activities, operates summer camping programs for youth, a lodge and retreat center for groups and is affiliated with the Virginia Mennonite Conference. Candidates should have leadership experience in a Christian camp or not-for-profit organization, experience in program development and/or strategic planning, strong interpersonal skills, visionary leadership attributes and a living Christian faith. The executive director is responsible to oversee camp operations, finances and staff and work closely with the board of directors, donors and constituency. Please send cover letter, resumé and three letters of reference (one from pastor) to: Chair, Search Committee, Highland Retreat, c/o 61 S. Main St., Harrisonburg, VA 22801, www.highlandretreat.org.

Lancaster Mennonite School is seeking candidates for the ***full-time position of associate in advancement***. Candidates should be committed to the mission/vision of Lancaster Mennonite School, have strong relational/listening and organizational skills, be a self starter and be able to communicate effectively orally and in writing. Being familiar with Internet social networking is a plus. The position will focus on alumni and donor relations and relate to several advancement events committees. People from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups are encouraged to apply. For more information contact Heidi Stoltzfus at 717-299-0436, ext. 308, and stoltzfushe@lancastermennonite.org, or Richard Thomas at 717-299-0436, ext. 301, and thomasjr@lancastermennonite.org.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email Advertising@TheMennonite.org.



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And then there were three

Sara Wenger Shenk is an author and serves as associate dean and associate professor of Christian practices at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.

The wife of a recent seminary graduate on a service assignment in east Africa emailed me a couple months ago. She wrote: "I'm sitting at my kitchen table trying to pick a few harmless fruit worms out of the guava I'm eating. I've been in Kenya for a year and somehow still can't convince myself to just eat the guava without looking. Anyway, I picked up your book *And Then There Were Three* again the other day for the third time since I became a parent. I had been toying with the idea of writing a similar book myself but breathed a sigh of relief as I browsed yours: The book in my head has already been written. How convenient!

"The main thrust of the book is so refreshing to me," she wrote. "I really identify with the struggle to parent well and have my identity survive. You had framed the struggle in a life-giving way. However, since I was born in the '80s, I get lost on the details about wrestling with the feminist movement of the '60s and '70s. I wondered if you've considered doing another edition.

"I know that the survival of young parents isn't the primary issue on your plate these days, but the book is so good I would like to see it connecting with another generation of Mennonite parents. Have you ever considered it?"

I was gratified to hear that my labor of love from 24 years ago has resonance with a next-generation mother. I still hear from women (my age) who remark on how critically important the book was for them when they began parenting. I agreed to consider a rewrite of the book. In the meantime—for Mother's Day, here is an edited excerpt from the Introduction:

On a cold winter night, our family made a stressful overnight train trip from Switzerland to (former) Yugoslavia. Gerald was assigned to a men's sleeping compartment with our 3-year-old son. I had a berth in a women's compartment with our 3-month-old baby.

My two cabinmates expected the worst. The baby was screaming in full fury as the journey began. Frequent nursing and soothing kept him in line through border crossings, customs inspections and a blaring radio with raucous drunken laughter in the next compartment.

As dawn began to gleam, Gerald came to give me a break. While he paced the passageway, babe in arms, a burly fellow laughed in derision nearby.

"I never touched mine until they were at least 2 years old," he scoffed.

I winced. His scorn was directed both at my adequacy and at Gerald's masculinity. But then a powerful gratitude welled up—gratitude for a husband who is man enough to care for little ones, gratitude that I am not the slave of a man who despises babies and those who are intimately involved in their care, and gratitude that I am part of a faith community that welcomes women to exercise their gifts in the church and encourages men to minister to the children.

[This book] emerges from my deep conviction that women and men are equal partners in life, coheirs both of the capability and the responsibility to serve God with their total beings.

Oh for a chalet on the quiet shores of a golden pond from which to ponder my metamorphosis into motherhood! But no, the baby at my knee impatiently clamoring, and the boy at my elbow drawing zany clowns "for you, Mom" add poignancy and urgency to my reflection on this enormous upheaval in the life of any woman.

Women and men are equal partners in life.

I was present several years ago at a church Mother's Day celebration. Little children in the most endearing voices recited poems in honor of their mothers. Many an adult eye filled with tears. The pastor reminded the congregation of the sacrifices their mothers had made for them. Bouquets of flowers had been prepared for each child to carry to his or her mother. My 3-year-old bounded up gleefully, bouquet in hand, and thrust it to me. "Mama, this is for you."

My response was mixed. It was the first time I had attended a Mother's Day program as a mother. That my son singled me out was heartwarming. But why had mothers been spoken of in such reverent, teary voices? Why were women's gifts (other than motherhood) undervalued, rarely mentioned and never exercised in that pulpit?

I gladly received my son's bouquet and gave him a squeeze. Then I suggested that we share it with his father and another friend beside us. He readily agreed. The benefits of good parenting flow among all of us.

A woman called out to Jesus, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked." Jesus responded, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it." Performing the motherly functions of birthing and nurturing is not enough. Jesus calls for understanding and obedience, theological awareness and witness by all his followers. TM

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

The Roots of Concern: Writings on Anabaptist Renewal 1952-1957, edited by Virgil Vogt (Cascade Books, 2009, $23), includes the first four volumes of *Concern: A Pamphlet Series for Questions of Christian Renewal.* Contributors include Paul Peachey, John W. Miller, John Howard Yoder, David A. Shank and Norman Kraus.

Solitude and Compassion: The Path to the Heart of the Gospel by Gus Gordon (Orbis, 2009, $18) explores how to become fully human by learning to become close to your inner self both in solitude and in joining your neighbor in solidarity.

Paradoxology: Spirituality in a Quantum Universe by Miriam Therese Winter (Orbis, 2009, $20) fuses science and spirituality, poetry and prose, personal narrative and cosmic vision.

A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation by Naim Stifan Ateek (Orbis, 2009, $24) outlines the unique role that Palestinian Christians can play in creating justice and peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Christ in the Margins (Orbis, 2009, $20) includes icons and biographies by Robert Lentz and reflections by Edwina Gateley. Among the 41 full-color icons are the Syro-Phoenician Woman, Johann Sebastian Bach, Black Elk, and J.R.R. Tolkien.

American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty by George E. "Tink" Tinker (Orbis, 2008, $22) builds on the history of pain and violence against American Indians while pointing "to a more balanced and healing future for those who inhabit the continent today."

God Does Not ... Entertain, Play Matchmaker, Hurry, Demand Blood, Cure Every Illness, edited by D. Brent Laytham (Brazos Press, 2009, $17.99), includes essays by theologians who challenge misconceptions of how God works in the world.

Claiming the Beatitudes: Nine Stories from a New Generation by Ann Sutherland Howard (The Alban Institute, 2009, $17) uses Jesus' beatitudes to challenge us to live as the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world," recognizing that God is present and active in our lives today.

At-Tuwani Journal: Hope and Nonviolent Action in a Palestinian Village by Arthur G. Gish (Herald Press, 2009, $17.99) offers an inside view of the work of Christian Peacemaker Teams in the Palestinian town of At-Tuwani. Gish presents a candid, sympathetic portrait of traditional Palestinians in the shadow of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

The Portal of Beauty: Toward a Theology of Aesthetics by Bruno Forte (Eerdmans, 2008, $30) examines the contribution of theological thought—from Augustine, Aquinas, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Balthasar and Evdokimov—to the understanding and experience of beauty.

God in the Gallery: A Christian Embrace of Modern Art by Daniel A. Siedell (BakerAcademic, 2008, $24.99) constructs a framework for interpreting modern art from a Christian worldview.

Hope Indeed! Remarkable Stories of Peacemakers by N. Gerald Shenk (Orbis, 2008, $9.95) is a collection of stories of ordinary people behaving with extraordinary hope. The stories include that of Ned Wyse, a farmer/pastor in Michigan who responds to a vicious beating by neighborhood youths, the Palestinian parents who gave their young murdered son's organs to ill Jewish children and others.

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Everett J. Thomas

The church and the magazine business

Running a magazine is a business. Running churchwide agencies and colleges is big business. Congregations pay attention to labor laws for their employees, budget for operating expenses and decide how to depreciate assets. A healthy church will have leadership that understands the business side of ministry.

Often, however, we bifurcate business from church. At times, members with successful businesses are treated in a dismissive manner. Or we assume the church is so different that good business practices are irrelevant. But business disciplines, such as strategic planning, are especially important during times such as these.

The consultant who led our board of directors and staff members in its strategic planning session on March 20 said to us all: "You are not a print magazine any more. You need to think of yourself as a content provider."

We now print fewer than 10,000 copies of this magazine each time we go to press. However, the total number of people who read what we publish has reached a 10-year-high. That's because we now publish in four different media (see chart below).

This is the evolution of the magazine business. Four years ago our board of directors saw the writing on the wall, or rather, the writing on the Internet. Looking ahead, they invested heavily in a new Web site that would have many new capabilities. These include the ability to link electronic magazines (ezines) to the Web site.

In the next month or two we expect the Web site to have as many users as there are subscribers to *The Mennonite*. These are people who prefer to receive their news and articles electronically. Or they like to receive as much information as possible and read both the print magazine as well as everything we publish electronically.

Our free weekly electronic magazine, called *TMail*, now has more than 1,500 subscribers. Our free Spanish-language ezine, called *Meno Acontecer*, has nearly 500 subscribers.

Together these four media—*The Mennonite* magazine, our Web site (ww.themennonite.org), *TMail* and *Meno Acontecer*—are the ways we are responding to the market available to us. Fortunately, we are beginning to generate advertising revenue from the Web site and ezines. As the numbers grow, we can generate more advertising income because advertisers will pay more for the additional eyes that read their messages.

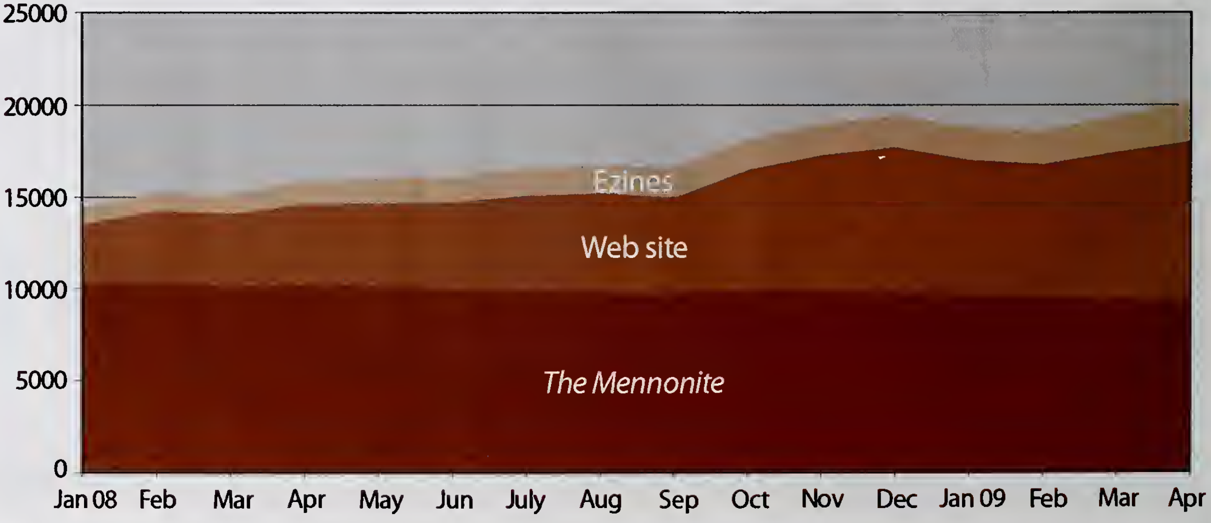
Those of us providing editorial content for members of Mennonite Church USA know well how difficult it is to be in this business. But we also know that the marriage of business with the work of the church is a great privilege. Thanks for being such a good customer!—*ejt*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

Four media

The chart (right) is an aggregate total of the subscribers and users of four media published by The Mennonite, Inc. They include:

- *The Mennonite*
- Web site
- *TMail*, a free weekly electronic magazine
- *Meno Acontecer*, a free monthly electronic magazine for Hispanic leaders . To subscribe to *TMail* or *Meno Acontecer*, email AnnaG@TheMennonite.org.



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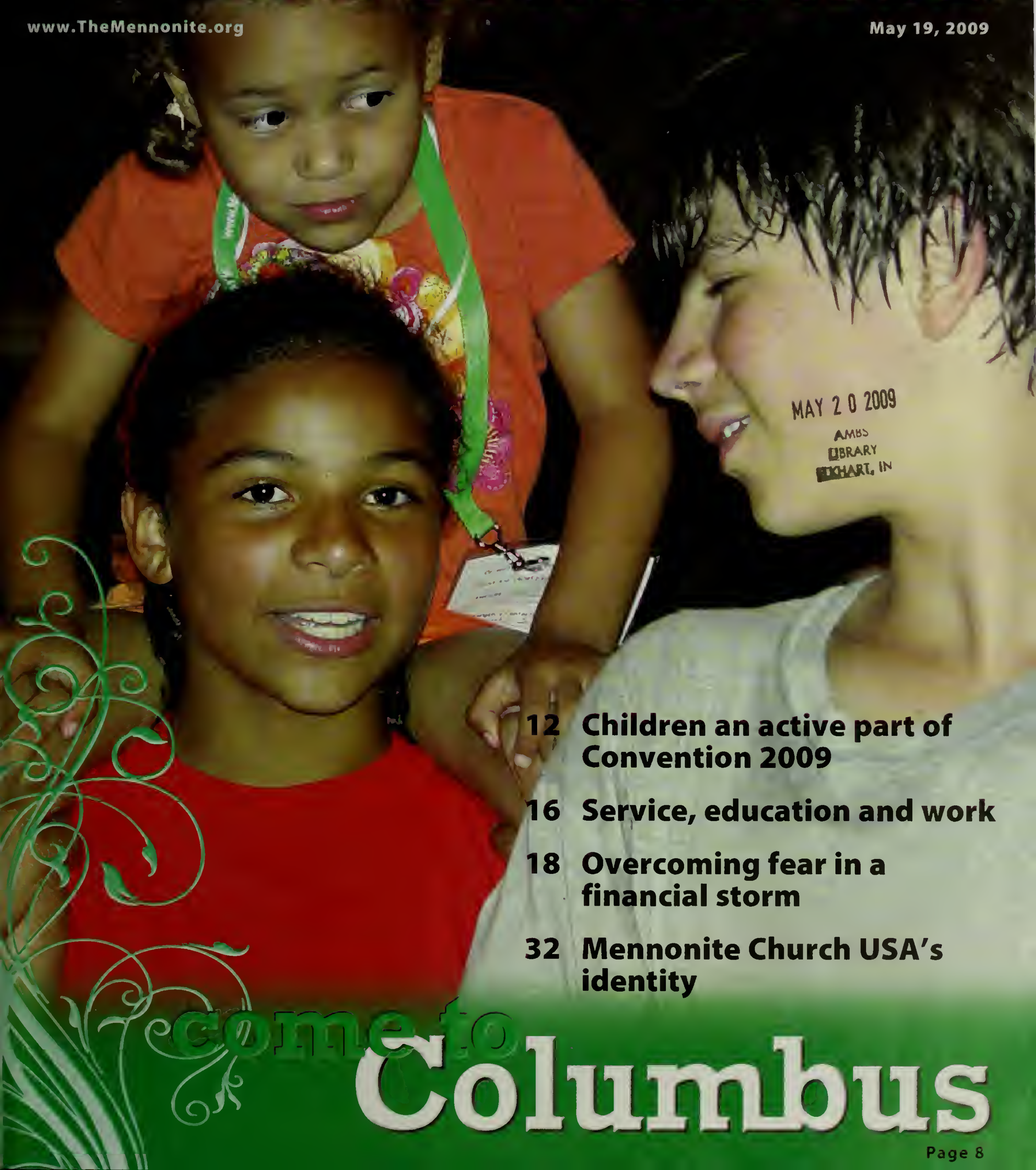

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32 Mennonite Church USA's identity

come to Columbus

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Not just another meeting

James Schrag is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

To what should we compare a churchwide convention—to a county fair, a revival service, a congregational business meeting, a hymn sing, a mass youth gathering, a drama and musical exposition, a camp meeting?

All these and more may qualify, but none can capture the essence of a churchwide convention. Its uniqueness is not in its smorgasbord of events and opportunities but in the nature of the people who gather there.

All ages gather from across 21 conferences and many congregations. Here is where the melting pot of Mennonite Church USA is expressed in a unique way found nowhere else. The whole church is gathered to worship, learn, make decisions, establish new relationships, be heard and listen to the hearts of others.

This is not just another meeting. If you could experience this in your congregation or conference, this meeting would not be necessary. This is the one place we experience the entire breadth, height and depth of our Mennonite Church USA peoplehood.

Not everyone comes, to be sure. It takes some planning, money and travel. It's usually held in a convention center in a large city. Some people like that kind of location, others prefer more intimate or bucolic settings. The choice of location is facility-driven—how to house people, allow them to meet and mingle, feed them and give them a place to worship. Our conventions are of a size that few other facilities can handle.

The largest group is under age 21. A long tradition of youth conventions precedes our current experiences. The youth program inspires participants to greater commitments to Christ and the church. Some adults come just to be around the youth. Adults are strange that way; they take hope from being close to young people, hearing them and hearing about them. Though the adult and youth programs are separate, there are more opportunities for intergenerational dialogue, and young adult participation in the delegate assembly is growing.

The delegate assembly will meet for four hours each of four days. Ninety percent of the delegates are sent from congregations; the rest come from conferences, racial-ethnic groups and members of the Executive Board. The delegate assembly is the highest and final decision-making body of Mennonite Church USA. Between biennial sessions, the Executive Board acts for the delegates. The moderator leads both the Executive Board and the delegate assembly.

Since 2001, when two delegate bodies met to form Mennonite Church USA, we have assigned all delegates to round tables. This gives opportunity for discussion and sharing of ideas and perspectives. Tables are encouraged to send reports to microphones for all to hear of their discussion, questions and counsel.

Delegates often ask for something and receive the work back two years later. In 2007, delegates asked for a study on what it means to be a citizen and a Christian in the United States. They also asked the Executive Board to implement a plan for health-care access for all pastors, since some cannot get or afford coverage now.

Planning for this event is a big deal. Staff from the convention planning office labor at this task for two years. They enlist many volunteers in the planning of worship and implementation of program. If you've never attended a churchwide convention, maybe this is your year. You won't regret coming to be with God's people in Mennonite Church USA. Register at www.MennoniteUSA.org. TM

TheMennonite

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Cover: Photo by Anna Groff

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Virginia's pastors don't need plan

In the April 21 issue, Keith Harder's article "A Step Toward Greater Justice" raises some serious questions for me. What is the difference between MMA (Mennonite Mutual Aid) of today and the MMA of the past that makes the diverging route of mutual aid so important? How many churches are affected by the lack of coverage for their leaders? Why are they not eligible for coverage under MMA now? With a certain part of our government working so hard to bring us a national program of health care, where are we as Mennonite Church USA via MMA pushing just as hard for "universal health care" for all members, not just leadership?

I find The Corinthian Plan approach not a step toward greater justice but rather selective justice and opposed to the New Testament directive of who we help first. In Virginia, almost all our leadership is paid and with fringe benefits surpassing many of its membership. Why should we start at this level or not work at both levels at the same time?—*Luke M. Drescher, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Response from Gautsche and Harder

The Corinthian Plan will make health coverage accessible to the 80-100 pastors serving Mennonite Church USA congregations that do not have health insurance. In most cases they and the congregations they serve do not have the financial resources to buy health insurance. As an expression of mutual aid, the plan will help these congregations provide basic health insurance for their pastors.

All those working on The Corinthian Plan, including MMA, are committed to finding ways to extend health coverage to others without adequate access to health care. Whatever our government does, mutual aid in the church will continue to have a vital role in achieving this goal. Reviving practices of mutual aid is more important than ever; it is part of our fulfilling our missional calling.

The delegates in San José, Calif., in 2007 saw that providing coverage for our pastors is an investment in the health and leadership of our congregations but is only a start; a modest down payment on addressing the health-care needs of others in our church and beyond.—*David Gautsche, senior vice president, products and services, MMA; Keith Harder, director for health-care access for pastors and church workers, Mennonite Church USA*

A cool inspiration-action flow

I was really moved by the Easter issue (April 7) of *The Mennonite*. I read the publication all the time, but I just wanted to give a special shout-out to this one. We just received it here in the Mennonite World Conference office in Strasbourg.

I paged through it slowly, between sending emails about Global Mission Fellowship logistics, calling churches in Latin America and resolving a theological and practical debate among the AMIGOS. Eleanor Miller kept chuckling at me because periodically throughout the day—without any apparent instigation—I'd say, "I love this job!" One thing that made me say it (I am doing my seminary internship in "global church communication facilitation") is that I felt like the nurture of the faith was coming in on my left side (via the magazine), and on my right-hand side I was writing and thinking and producing and coordinating. It was a cool inspiration-action flow.

After reading it, I wanted to send the articles by Peter Dula and Regina Shands-Stoltzfus to some people. So I went to your Web site. I found this brilliant article there called "A Stranger Hugged Me." Is there any way that could be featured in the print edition? It seems like such an awesome story of pacifist intervention on so many levels. We are told that doing something like that poses the greatest challenge to our faith in nonviolence. But there is an example of when it worked.

I also want you to know that I have been spreading the word through the use of the Feb. 3 national identity issue ("Mennonite in America"). Not many people here have seen updated images of Mennonites, and this is really helpful.—*Sarah Thompson, Strasbourg, France*

The violence is ours, not God's

Thank you for the April 7 article by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek that takes us beyond retributive justice in atonement theory. The characterization

IN THIS ISSUE

Every two years we publish an issue that helps prepare people for a Mennonite Church USA convention. This summer's biennial convention will take place June 30-July 5 in Columbus, Ohio. This issue can help you be ready to attend or alert you to the issues and concerns Mennonite Church USA delegates and other members hope to address. Anna Groff, our assistant editor, wrote about three women who've given long service to the children's convention (page 12). She also introduces us to two Mennonite Church USA congregations in Columbus, Columbus Mennonite Church (page 14) and Agora Christian Fellowship (page 16). At Convention 2009, delegates will have a chance to affirm a new moderator-elect (see page 19). Everett Thomas asks what it means to be a peace church in our U.S. context (page 32).—*Associate Editor* of God in atonement thinking, as elsewhere, is critical for us: a violent God—a violent society.

If we want our neighbors, our children and our grandchildren to become and remain Christian, we must leave behind the conception of a God who demands the sacrifice of his own son (echoes of Molech, not Jehovah) to satisfy his own needs (honor, wrath, payment) and embrace a loving, forgiving, compassionate God who will not give up on us but will, in union with the Son, go to any length, including death on the cross (the violence is all ours, not God's) to demonstrate his great love for us, to disempower the powers that enslave us, to free us to partner with him in the reign of heaven on earth. Why he loves us so, without payment and unconditionally, is a mystery to me. But it's a mystery with which I can gladly live.—*John A. Hertzler, Edinburg, Va.*

Do not trust sexual predators

Regarding "Mennonite Churches Discern If and How to Minister to Convicted Sex Offenders" (April 21): I've been a prison chaplain in Nebraska for 20 years and work in the two worst penitentiaries in the state. I work with pedophiles and sexual predators. I do not agree with the assumptions made by some of the folks in Anna Groff's article. There's a little naiveté there. Pedophilia is a disease, an addiction. Those folks have been badly abused as children. Many men who are pedophiles come from single-parent families. Their mothers molested them. The parents should have been prosecuted way back when. I minister to the souls of these men and leave the rest up to God. I've led more than 500 men to Christ and baptized a like number, but I would not want to put any of them around my grandchildren. It's the trust factor. Sexual predators are liars. I praise God that some congregations are attempting to minister to them, but they won't be able to monitor it. When something goes wrong it will be someone's child.
—*William Hartwell, Omaha, Neb.*

Sex offenders in the church

Thank you for the work Anna Groff did to research, write and edit the article "Mennonite Churches Discern If and How to Minister to Convicted Sex Offenders" and the editorial, "Sex Offenders in the Church" (April 21). She did well with a difficult subject. I am eager to read how the readers of *The Mennonite* respond.—*Paul Unruh, North Newton, Kan.*

Receiving allows others a blessing

The challenging article "Giving and Receiving" by Donna Mast (Grace and Truth, April 21) sparked memories of Edith Herr, former faculty member at Goshen (Ind.) College. Diagnosed with multiple sclerosis at age 30, Edith soon needed to use a wheelchair and did so until her death at age 78. When she first realized she needed help, she resented receiving without giving. Then she decided that if someone were to experience the blessing of giving, there needed to be a receiver. She graciously accepted help from others and found other ways to give. May God help all of us to be both givers and receivers.—*Margaret Derstine, Lancaster, Pa.*

Saving the fetus is also violence

The letter by Jerry C. Stanaway in the April 21 issue holds that "abortion is always wrong." He defends the position that abortion being evil includes abortion to save the life of the mother and that even such an abortion is an act of violence, which is wrong. It appears that refraining to operate in a way that does not seek to preserve the mother's life in that situation is also an act of violence. Stanaway is standing for a view that puts in conflict a violence toward the mother and a violence toward the unborn child. If that is the truth, would not a choice to save the fetus rather than the mother be a greater act of violence than to spare the mother rather than the fetus, if a choice must be made?—*Paul H. Martin, Akron, Pa.*

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Regarding the Mennonite Church USA convention this summer (54 votes):

○ I will attend. (56%)

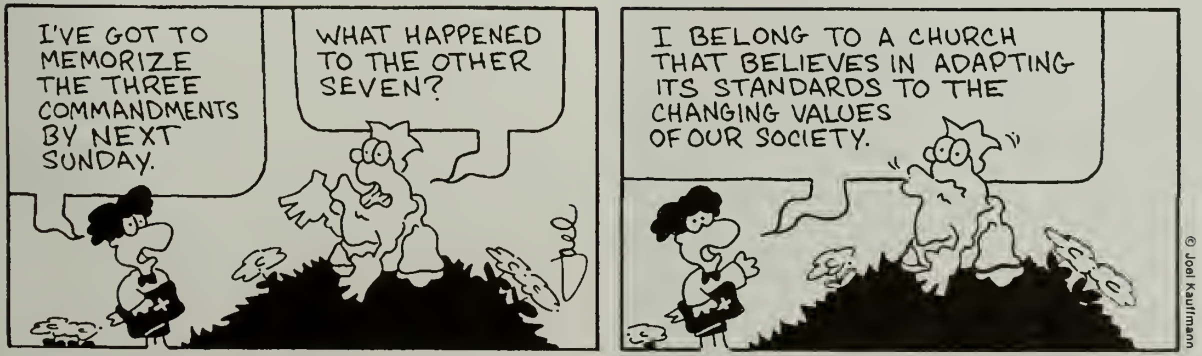
○ Someone else from my church will attend. (28%)

○ No one from my church will attend. (9%)

○ Not sure (7%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


I'VE GOT TO MEMORIZE THE THREE COMMANDMENTS BY NEXT SUNDAY.
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHER SEVEN?
I BELONG TO A CHURCH THAT BELIEVES IN ADAPTING ITS STANDARDS TO THE CHANGING VALUES OF OUR SOCIETY.
© Joel Kauffmann

IN BRIEF

New Mennonite Your Way book

The new 2009-2011 Mennonite Your Way hospitality travel directory is now available. The directory lists 1,700 contacts in more than 60 countries. To order or register, go to www.mennoniteyourway.com or call 847-949-6179 or mail to "MYW," 80 West Sylvan Drive, Mundelein, IL 60060-3315.
—MYW editors

OK with torture?

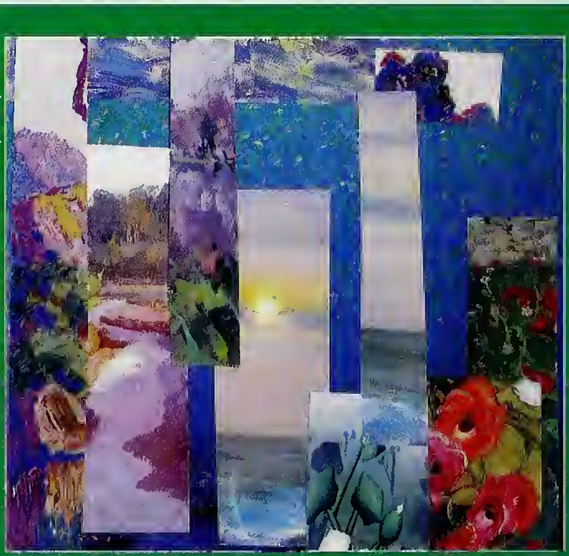
The more often you go to church, the more you approve of torture. This is a finding of a new survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. Shouldn't it be the opposite? Since Jesus wouldn't even let Peter use a sword to defend him from arrest, it would seem that those who follow Jesus would strenuously oppose the violence of torture. But not so in America today. Instead more than half those who attend worship at least once a week, or 54 percent, say that using torture on suspected terrorists is "often" or "sometimes" justified. White evangelical Protestants are the church-going group most likely to approve of torture. By contrast, those who are unaffiliated with a religious organization and don't attend worship are most opposed to torture—only 42 percent of those people approve of using torture.
—Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, The Washington Post

Mennonite Mission streamlines ministry

ELKHART, Ind.—In early April, Mennonite Mission Network announced a two-year goal of reducing its annual budget by 10 percent. Temporary cuts, which will lower costs by $500,000, have enabled Mission Network to make reductions in a strategic way.

Permanent cuts of $1.3 million will be phased in over a two-year period in order to preserve $9 million of ongoing ministry. Planning reductions over a longer time period allows Mission Network to offer a generous severance policy to staff whose positions are eliminated, to reorganize departments, to implement new ways of working and to take advantage of natural staff and worker transitions. Mission Network also has commitments to partners across the globe that may need to be renegotiated. Reductions to international ministries will be achieved largely through staff and worker retirement, and completion of assignments and reduction of grants to partners and ministries. These cost-saving measures were informed by the five-year ministry review process completed in March.

Reductions to U.S. ministries are the result of a challenge from constituents to broaden ministry in the United States. Also announced were staff reductions through retirement, reassignment or eliminated positions. These staff will receive extended benefits in addition to a typical severance package.*—Mennonite Mission Network*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A prayer collage to remember the Congo

Last year, Suella Gerber, member of Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., made this prayer collage to remember the two Mennonite conferences in Congo in which Mennonite Church USA is developing a church-to-church relationship.*—Mennonite Church USA*

Christian Peacemaker Teams suspend work

CHICAGO—Christian Peacemaker Teams may need to suspend and scale back peacemaking work because funds are low. Last year the U.S. dollar was down, costs up and donations from individuals and congregations dropped 9 percent. Also, circumstances required CPT to find new office space in Chicago. Some CPTers have offered to work full-time without pay or with stipend cuts.

If funds are available, the Palestine team will begin renewed work in the old city of Al Khalil (Hebron) in mid-May. However, there are no funds to send more CPTers to the Democratic Republic of Congo. CPT Iraq accompanies Kurdish Iraqi villagers displaced by Turkish bombing. By moving the team out to the less-expensive border area, which is under bombardment, and taking other savings measures, CPT hopes to extend support for this project through the end of the year. Donate at www.cpt.org/participate/donate.*—CPT*

Mennonite educators address distinctives

LANCASTER, Pa.—Approximately 50 Mennonite educators and administrators and people from Mennonite Church USA conferences and agencies attended the symposium Mennonite Education: Why and How? May 8 at the Lancaster campus of Lancaster Mennonite School.

Gerald Mast, professor of communication at Bluffton (Ohio) University, said, "The affects of Mennonite education are more widespread and complex than we might think." He named three ways Mennonite higher education "proclaims the good news": the cognitive experience of new sight, spiritual discovery of the mission of the church and the practical development of Christ-following habits..*—Anna Groff*

New office expands West Coast MCC's vision

REEDLEY, Calif.—New local partnerships are enabling West Coast Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to expand its community-building services in Reedley and consolidate administrative offices in Fresno.

Beginning July 1, West Coast MCC will move its operational functions to an administrative services center located on the Fresno Pacific University campus, adjacent to the Center for Peacemaking and Victim Offender Reconciliation Program offices. West Coast MCC's material resource and quilting work, as well as its women's and immigration ministries, will continue to operate in their current location in downtown Reedley.

West Coast MCC will then be able to fulfill a request from the Reedley Police Department for expanded community services.*—MCC*

Bluffton University

luffton professor collects donations from dorms
luffton (Ohio) University math professor Darryl Nester stands ith donations for the local Et Cetera Shop from Bluffton stu- ents. Since 2001, Nester and his wife, Lori Miller Nester, and heir children have been putting boxes in the Bluffton resi- ence halls at the end of each academic year to collect dona- ons.—*Bluffton University*

Mennonite Church in Cuba unexpectedly born

WINNIPEG—On Aug. 19, 2008, the Mennonite Church in Cuba—Iglesia Menonita en Cuba—was officially born. When Mennonite Church Canada first began walking with Cubans through various types of ministry 20 years ago, there was no intention to create a new church. Cuba already had numerous denominations. But a strong desire for peace theology enhanced the appeal of an Anabaptist vision.

With the conviction of Pastor Alexander Reyna and Pastor Eugenio, the new church's treasurer, Iglesia Menonita en Cuba has grown to include 10 cell groups with a total of about 120 people. In November 2008, a delegation met with Iglesia Menonita en Cuba to determine how other Mennonite organizations can support them. The delegation also met with potential partners in Cuba. Currently, Iglesia Menonita en Cuba is not officially recognized by the Cuban government, thus limiting membership to cell groups of no more than 15 people.—*MC Canada*

Goshen College students to serve as delegates

GOSHEN, Ind.—Ten Goshen College students will serve as delegates for the upcoming Delegate Assembly at the Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009, June 30 to July 5 in Columbus, Ohio. Goshen is providing partial financial support for the students.

The 10 students are Maria Byler, Benton Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.; Emily Graber, Methacton Mennonite Church, Norristown, Pa.; Nathan Grieser, North Goshen Mennonite Church; Caitlin Helmuth, Harrisonburg (Va.) Mennonite Church; Betsy Houser, Sunnyslope Mennonite Church, Phoenix, Ariz.; Morgan Kraybill, Community Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg; Amy Showalter, Community Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg; Libby Smith, First Mennonite Church, Iowa City, Iowa.; Jennifer Speight, Friendship Mennonite Church, Bedford Heights, Ohio; and Greg Yoder, Perkasie (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

Five will serve as official delegates from their home congregation or conference. The other five will fully participate in delegate sessions but will not be able to vote.—*Goshen College*

Church addresses immigration, food justice

MINNEAPOLIS—Faith Mennonite Church here held a community forum March 29 on "Immigration and Food Justice: A Multi-Faith Dialogue." This interreligious dialogue addressed how the distinctive food traditions of Islam, Judaism and Christianity are linked to questions of immigration, the working conditions of the people that produce and distribute food, the effects of industrial corporate agriculture on the environment, human health and the economy.

Church and community members attended as well as members of co-sponsoring organizations: the Islamic Center of Minnesota, Jewish Community Action, Oxfam-America, Bread for the World and the Land Stewardship Project.—*Ry O. Siggelkow*

The Mennonite wins four awards at ACP

INDIANAPOLIS—*The Mennonite* won four awards on May 7 at the annual Associated Church Press convention. The awards included one for the magazine's Web site, the second year in a row the Web site was honored in this way. Three articles published in 2008 also received citations, including the magazine's first award for humor: "My Ensemble Experience" by Dan Schreiber (June 3, 2008). "Does Revelation Speak Today?" by Ted Grimsrud (Sept. 2, 2008) received an award in the biblical interpretation category, and "Lessons from the Road" by Arthur Paul Boers (March 4, 2008) received an award in the devotional category. ACP is the oldest religious press association in North America. This year's convention was held conjointly with the Evangelical Press Association in Indianapolis.—*Everett Thomas*

—compiled by Anna Groff

IN BRIEF

Gross is executive secretary emeritus

Leonard Gross, who directed denominational historical ministries for 20 years, has been named executive secretary emeritus of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee. Gross, Goshen, was executive secretary of the Historical Committee of the former Mennonite Church from 1970 to 1990. *—Mennonite Church USA*

Conference calls for end to wars

In April Central Plains Mennonite Conference wrote a letter to President Barack Obama regarding two resolutions: to end American participation in the war in Iraq and to address the civil war in Colombia. The resolutions were passed by delegate action at the June 19-22, 2008, assembly in Lincoln, Neb. *—Central Plains Mennonite Conference*

MWC registration

As of May 6, total registration for Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15 in July was 4,236. Totals from various regions: Africa: 149; Asia and Pacific: 71; Canada: 641; Europe: 331; Paraguay: 2,056; rest of Latin America: 312; and the United States: 676. *—MWC*

breathe And Be Filled

Come to Columbus

Convention 2009 happens June 30-July 5 in Columbus, Ohio. It is our fourth convention as Mennonite Church USA.

The convention theme is "Breathe and Be Filled," a theme meant to remind us that before we can recognize where God is at work in the world and join that work, we must first breathe in and be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, writes Marathana Prothro, identity director, Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership. In John 20:21-22, Jesus breathes on the disciples and invites them to receive God's Spirit so they can be prepared for the work that lies ahead. Just as Jesus' disciples were encouraged to take in God's Spirit so they could do God's work in the world, so will everyone who comes to Convention 2009 be invited to take a moment to stop and breathe in God's Spirit. It's not about breathing to be content. It's about breathing so that Mennonite Church USA can grow as a community of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

As with past conventions, this one will include times for worship, Bible study and seminars, plus servant projects, a choir, a bloodmobile, a hymn sing, a 5K fun run/walk and prayer rooms.

Worship leaders for the adult sessions are Joel Miller, pastor at Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship, and Regina Shands Stoltzfus of Elkhart, Ind., who teaches Bible, religion, philosophy, and peace and conflict studies at Goshen (Ind.) College. Tim Shue of Kidron, Ohio, will direct the adult worship music.

Worship leaders for the youth sessions are Peter Eberly, youth pastor at Harrisonburg (Va.) Mennonite Church, and Anna D. Hinojosa Gomez of Los Fresnos, Texas, who works as a psychotherapist with children, adolescents and women. Jeremy Kempf, Goshen, Ind., a recruitment coordinator at Mennonite Mission Network, will direct the youth worship music.

There are also programs for young adults, junior youth and children (see page 12).

Updates on Twitter will be posted throughout each day of the convention and daily on Facebook. Go to www.MennoniteUSA.org. Also, follow "themennonite" Twitter updates from Columbus.—*Gordon Houser, associate editor of* The Mennonite.

Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' —John 20:21-22 NRSV

What delegates may expect

Wednesday, July 1

All delegates are encouraged to be present for the opening session. Leaders will be introduced and delegates will get acquainted with each other in their table groups and participate in the first Dwelling in the Word Bible study. Delegates will be oriented to the process and agenda for the week. We will hear from churchwide guests.

We will examine the larger context for our calling and work together in Mennonite Church USA. A churchwide financial report will be presented and delegates will examine priorities, initiatives and strategies for the church. The Executive Board will present its biennial report and project goals for the future. There will be time for table discussion and response from the floor. Following the delegate session, agency roundtables will give delegates an opportunity to talk to the leaders of our churchwide agencies.

Thursday, July 2

After a Dwelling in the Word Bible study, delegates will talk about the 2007 Assembly resolution on national identity and challenges to our ministry together in our cultural context. Table group and floor time will be followed by an initial report from the Listening Committee. We'll connect with several more churchwide guests and hear about follow through on the 2007 Delegate Assembly resolution to join Christian Churches Together.

Delegates will hear a joint report about the work of the church through the Executive Board and its four churchwide agencies, including an update on the Joining together, Investing in hope capital campaign for new churchwide facilities in Elkhart, Ind. Table discussion and opportunity for comments from the floor will follow. An affirmation ballot for the next moderator-elect and churchwide board members will be followed by reports from Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite World Conference.

Friday, July 3

This session will feature input from the Constituency Leaders Council of area conferences and constituency groups as well as progress on the 2007 Delegate Assembly resolution on health-care access. The Corinthian Plan will provide health-care insurance for all pastors and church workers in Mennonite Church USA. Table group discussion and opportunity for comments from the floor will follow. The resolutions committee will present a report about potential new resolutions.

Delegates will be joined by representatives from the youth convention for a Dwelling in the Word Bible study and discussion, as well as a report from youth convention representatives. Table group and floor time will follow. After the listening committee gives its second report, the Assembly will give its attention to a call for racial healing and reconciliation among us.

Saturday, July 4

After our final Dwelling in the Word Bible study and a report about an initiative to provide more resources for our growing racial-ethnic congregations, delegate time is available for the resolutions committee to present new resolutions for consideration by the delegate body.

In the final delegate session we will reflect on our experiences in these delegate sessions and encourage each other to greater faithfulness in our work together. The listening committee will present its final report and unfinished business will be completed. Table group and floor time will follow. Transitions in leadership will be recognized.

Comparing numbers at Convention 2009

Finally, Mennonites get to meet in Columbus, Ohio. Jorge Vallejos, director of convention planning, says his office hoped to hold conventions in Columbus previous years, and now that wish has come true.

For many convention-goers, the advantage of Columbus is the location. Also, downtown Columbus is "very walkable," he says.

"Attendance declined by 2,000 in San José, Calif., and most of us attributed that to location," he says.

Registration numbers for Convention 2009 (see box) are higher than for San José but lower than for Charlotte, N.C. We've anticipated from the beginning to have a higher turnout than we did in San José because about two-thirds of Mennonite Church USA constituents live within a day's drive of Columbus, Vallejos says. But numbers are not as high as Charlotte, we believe, because of the severe economic recession we have been living under.

We are thankful for the commitment of the many thousands who continue to support churchwide gatherings of Mennonite Church USA despite the economic downturn, he says. We may have many daily registrants, since many will be within a couple of hour's drive of Columbus, but we won't know that until the end of convention.

Some youth who live near the city may feel disappointed by the limited travel within their home state, or a nearby state, he says.

Vallejos says finding a balance with continuity between conventions and offering fresh elements at each convention remains an ongoing challenge for the convention planning office.

"We want people to have reasons to return and yet feel comfortable and familiar with the format of the week," he says.

The first-ever Pastor's Day, on June 30, offers a new element for Convention 2009. (Worship sessions for youth and adults begin June 30 in the evening. Pastors should arrive the evening of June 29.)

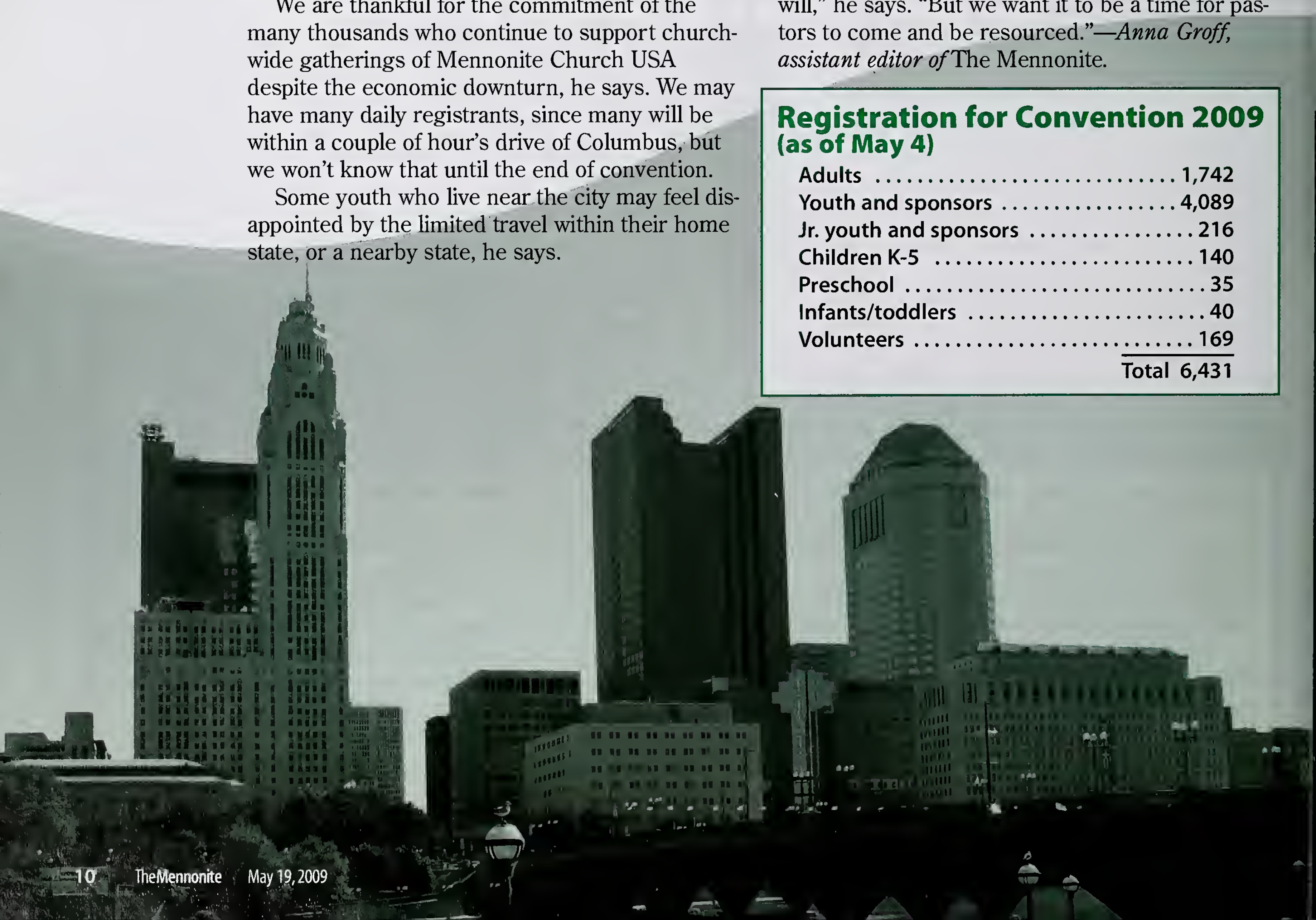
Participants will experience the theme of "Pastoral Ministry from a Missional Perspective." The day offers a time for pastors and spouses to connect, network and learn.

Vallejos says the day's purpose includes affirming and connecting pastors.

"We want the convention to be a delegate gathering to discuss the business of church and God's will," he says. "But we want it to be a time for pastors to come and be resourced."—*Anna Groff, assistant editor of* The Mennonite.

Registration for Convention 2009 (as of May 4)

Adults	1,742
Youth and sponsors	4,089
Jr. youth and sponsors	216
Children K-5	140
Preschool	35
Infants/toddlers	40
Volunteers	169
Total	6,431



Themes and speakers

Adult sessions

Tuesday evening, June 30

"Gathered in God's Spirit" (Acts 2:1-11; John 20:19b-21a)

Juana F. Nuñez (Juanita) works as a certified part-time chaplain with Marketplace Chaplains USA. She and Eligio, her husband, are co-pastors at Iglesia Cristiana Ebenezer in Apopka, Fla., where they were ordained into the ministry this past year. Juanita is moderator of the Iglesia Menonita Hispana and is the associate group's first woman to be elected as its moderator.

Wednesday morning, July 1

"Restored in God's Spirit" (Ezekiel 37:1-14; John 20:19-21a)

Jim Schrag is executive director of Mennonite Church USA and has spent the bulk of his career as a pastor.

Thursday morning, July 2

"Empowered by the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Shane Claiborne is the author of *The Irresistible Revolution* and *Jesus for President* and a founding partner of The Simple Way, a faith community in inner-city Philadelphia that has helped to birth and connect radical faith communities around the world, many of whom have become known as a "new monasticism."

Thursday evening joint worship

"Centered in the Spirit" (Psalm 121)

June Alliman Yoder recently retired from 27 years of teaching at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. She is a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen.

Mandy Yoder Schrock is on the pastoral team at Belmont Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind.

Friday morning, July 3

"Dwelling in the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:14-21)

Marvin Lorenzana, born in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, is director of the Multicultural Services Office at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

John Powell is ministry development consultant and interim director for U.S. Ministries at Mennonite Mission Network.

Megan Ramer is pastor of Chicago Community Mennonite Church.

Friday evening

"Worship: Celebration of Music" features the Convention 2009 hymn sing led by Byron Kaufman, with special guests Ted & Co. and Ken Medema. Immediately following the hymn sing, Western District Conference and Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., will present *Upside Down King*, an upbeat, fun and powerful retelling of the life and ministry of Jesus.

Saturday evening, July 4

"Anointed with the Oil of Gladness" (John 20, Isaiah 61:1-3)

Jim Wallis is author of *The Great Awakening: Reviving Faith & Politics in a Post-Religious Right America* and *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* and is president and CEO of Sojourners, where he is editor-in-chief of *Sojourners* magazine.

Youth sessions

Tuesday evening, June 30

"Celebrating the Spirit!" (John 20:21-22)

Brenda Matthews has traveled throughout the country and Africa to deliver her message of change to the "least of these."

Wednesday morning, July 1

"God's Awesome Power" (Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 18:1-19; Revelation 5:13, 7:10-12)

Shane Hipps is lead pastor of Trinity Mennonite Church, Phoenix, Ariz.

Wednesday evening

"Face Our Fears" (John 20:19-22)

Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg is pastor of youth, young adults and Christian education at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

Thursday morning, July 2

"Emptied" (John 12:1-8)

Leonard Dow is senior pastor at Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia.

Friday morning, July 3

"Filled as a New Creation" (2 Corinthians 5:16-21)

Shane Claiborne (see above)

Saturday morning, July 4

"Inspired to Live" (Romans 8:1-17)

Katie Boyts is a massage therapist, writer and speaker residing in Portland, Ore.

Dustin Galyon is the men's basketball coach and an admissions counselor for Hesston (Kan.) College.

Cyneatha Millsaps is lead pastor of Community Mennonite Church, Markham, Ill.

Hugo Saucedo is director of Mennonite Voluntary Service for Mennonite Mission Network.

Saturday evening

"Empowered with the Spirit" (John 20:21-22; Acts 2:14-39)

Greg Boyd is senior pastor of Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minn., and author of *Letters From a Skeptic* and *The Myth of a Christian Nation*.

Anna Groff

Children an active pa

Three women end long service at leading children's conventions

by Anna Groff

Three women will lead their final song and tell their final story to the children and preschoolers gathered at Convention 2009 in Columbus, Ohio.

This year Carol Grieser completes her fifth and final convention as leader of the children's gathering, the same for Susan Graber of the preschool gathering. Rose Widmer, who writes the curriculum for the children, plans to take a break from leading at conventions after this year, her fourth convention.

Children help us understand the love of Jesus. It's not complicated for them.—Carol Grieser

Children's gathering

The popular "random acts of kindness day" will continue this year on July 4 in Columbus, says Carol Grieser, children's coordinator.

On this day, the children share personal thank-you notes with candy, pencils and other treats to the staff people in the hotels and sing them a song.

According to Grieser, one staff person said, "No one has ever done this for us," and another person had tears in her eyes after she received the children's gifts. The day started at Convention 2005 in Charlotte, N.C., and serves as the Servant Project for the children.

Grieser says the children's gathering offers a time for children to learn, develop friendships and worship. It is not child care, she says.

This year, the children will also collect donations in buckets for swingsets for a church in Texas through Mennonite Mutual Aid and Mennonite Mission Network. Last year, the children raised $800 for medicine in hospitals in the Democratic Republic of Congo. "Even the MYFers gave a lot of money last year," she says.

Other activities for the children include a session with cooperative games; a session on bullying led by Steve Thomas of Walnut Hill Mennonite

John 20 : 21-22

breathe And be FiLLed

Children at Convention 2007 in San José, Calif.

Photo by Anna Groff

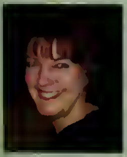
# of Convention 2009

Church, Goshen, Ind.; time with the "Lions and Lambs" group of Bluffton (Ohio) University, and a "make-it, take-it" time relating to the Convention 2009 theme.

On July 1 and 2, the children will work with a children's theater group from Columbus. The children will lead worship in the combined evening service on July 2.

"We tell the children it's not a performance but leading worship for the service," says Grieser. "Children help us understand the love of Jesus. It's not complicated for them."

On July 3, the children plan to visit the zoo, and Grieser invites parents to join.



[Volunteers] are a big part of what makes the program successful.—Susan Graber

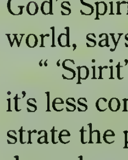
Preschool

Susan Graber, preschool coordinator, says she believes in the importance of preschoolers experiencing many hands-on opportunities. She acknowledges that the "Breathe and Be Filled" theme will be abstract for many preschoolers, but using familiar songs and stories will help children connect.

Daily themes include: "filled with joy," "filled with love" and "filled with God's peace."

Graber plans to tour the center's exhibit hall with the preschoolers and participate in the speakers and storytelling times that would be appropriate. She will investigate what "might be already happening that preschoolers would enjoy."

Graber says she still needs volunteers to work with the preschoolers for Columbus—hopefully people that have experience working with children. "Those people are a big part of what makes the program successful," she says.



Stories can demonstrate the power of God's Spirit and show how it does change people, not only in the Bible but today.—Rose Widmer

Curriculum

Through stories children discover the power of God's Spirit at work—personally and around the world, says Rose Widmer, curriculum writer.

" 'Spirit' is harder for children to grasp because it's less concrete," she says, "but stories can demonstrate the power of God's Spirit and show how it does change people, not only in the Bible but today."

Her curriculum for the children's gathering will include stories from the New Testament and stories from today. The curriculum teaches about the Holy Spirit and reminds children that after Jesus' ascension "we were not left alone but with the Spirit."

The planned activities will help children identify their gifts and discover how the Spirit may move in their lives, especially as they grow older, Widmer says.

"It's exciting to see how [the Spirit] will play out in children's lives," she says.

Anna Groff is assistant editor of The Mennonite.

Columbus
Mennonite
Church

A congregation of
Mennonite Church USA

Who we really are: Phil Hart and Jim Leonard at this year's Easter sunrise service.

Willing to exp

by Anna Groff

Pastor Susan Ortman Goering witnesses Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church's influence on people all over the country.

Susan says she meets many people who attended the congregation while enrolled as graduate students at Ohio State University (OSU) and then move elsewhere. This stream of new members also marks the challenging reality of ministering to a transient community.

People with not-Mennonite background are looking for churches that talk about peace and work at peace.—Susan Ortman Goering

"There's sadness when these people leave," Susan says, "but there's real joy in the sense that we are contributing to the larger church."

OSU graduate students started Columbus Mennonite in the 1960s; at that time the church's name was Neil Avenue Mennonite Church. The first charter meeting occurred in 1962. These students purchased church property and started a men's shelter.

The founders took "amazing risks to buy properties and reach out to the community," says Steve, who pastors Columbus Mennonite with Susan, his wife.

The congregation outgrew its building, relocated to an area north of downtown in 1998 and changed its name. It existed as one of the first two dual-conference (Mennonite Church-General Conference Mennonite Church) congregations and now relates to Central District Conference.

The current demographic of the 50-year-old congregation sees a wide spread of ages. Approximately 170 people attend on a given Sunday.

The young adult contingency, including about 15 undergraduate and graduate students, steadily increases at Columbus Mennonite.

"Our church chooses to really talk about relevant issues," says Steve. "We talk about all the different issues culture raises today."

These include abortion, intelligent design vs. evolution, sexuality issues, pornography and creation care. Steve and Susan led a "hot topic" sermon series last October that covered these topics.

"I think young adults appreciate churches willing to engage those things," Steve says.

Susan says many people find the congregation from Internet searches for churches and peace.

"People with not-Mennonite background are looking for churches that talk about peace and work at peace," she says.

Columbus Mennonite also provides tangible ways for young adults to work for peace and justice by contributing to the community and church life.

Many regularly volunteer at a YMCA family center and at a settlement house with a food bank. (This YMCA plans to host some Servant Project

Jep Hostetler

Service: Left to right: Elise Coble, Elizabeth Martin and Etta Coale at 2008 Vacation Bible School.

Columbus Mennonite Church convention involvement:

- Susan serves on the Convention 2009 planning committee.
- The mission commission and others helped coordinate the Servant Projects in the city.
- Jhan Yoder-Wyse and Virginia Nussbaum of Columbus Mennonite will provide the stage visuals for the convention.
- Members of Columbus Mennonite created a booth titled "How can we be silent" to share about the congregation.

riment

Columbus Mennonite Church is home to many 'new Mennonites' and explores 'hot topics.'

groups during Convention 2009.) Some young adults joined older adult and high school students on a trip to Honduras in 2007. The trip to Honduras scheduled for this summer makes it the third one. The group works at an orphanage there for children with AIDS or HIV.

Columbus Mennonite also participates in BREAD (Building Responsibility, Equality and Dignity), a group of more than 50 congregations, synagogues and one mosque that work together for systemic justice in the city of Columbus. Also the youth group volunteers at Agora Ministries (see story, page 16) once a month.

"We're working to a place that if we were to say who we really are, peace and justice commitment is important," Steve says.

Steve described three main goals of the congregation: building a sense of community, vibrant worship with "strong lay participation in worship and planning" and cultivating Mennonite identity and peace witness.

Half the congregation identify themselves as "new Mennonites," says Steve.

"We are really blessed by the new people," he says. "We're not a stuffy church; we're willing to experiment with new things."

For example, those members with Episcopal and Catholic backgrounds encourage Communion more often.

"We may be more diverse because there aren't 20 Mennonite churches in town," says Susan. "That presents a challenge sometimes, but I think in the long run it contributes to our spiritual growth and to our personal growth that we are constantly exposed to new and different ideas."

Anna Groff is assistant editor of The Mennonite.

We're not a stuffy church; we're willing to experiment with new things.—Steve Goering

Lois Maust

Left to right: Phil Hart, Susan Andre, Fred Suter and Pastor Steve Goering (boy unnamed to protect his identity) at the YWCA Family Center where a group from Columbus Mennonite Church serves meals to 80-250 people each month.

Service, educa

Agora Christian Fellowship and Agora Christian Ministries serve children and youth in Columbus.

by Anna Groff

About 70 children and youth eat a family-style meal together after Bible club every Wednesday night at Agora Christian Ministries in Columbus, Ohio.

Pastor Richard Bartholomew says these children rarely eat with their families at home, so this model is "by design."

This evening program and meal is one aspect of Agora Christian Ministries, which offers encouragement and opportunities to more than 100 underserved children and youth in Columbus. Agora Ministries frames its work with three goals for the youth it serves: service, education and work. A variety of programs and activities, fueled by volunteers, carries out the mission and goals.

The Mennonite Church USA congregation behind the ministry, Agora Christian Fellowship, began in 1994. Pastors Rich and Becky Bartholomew met with the original group and have been the pastors since the inception. While the ministry needs continue to grow, the congregation itself is small; about 50 attend on a Sunday morning.

During the meal, children practice serving food to one another, which is one of the ministry's goals—service.

"Sunday reflects the core church that's there," says Rich, "but it's hard to understand that fully without knowing about Wednesday and Sunday nights."

In addition to the Wednesday evening "kids club" or Bible club, Agora hosts a Saturday evening kids' church—a lively church service designed specifically for kids, Rich says.

Infants through young adults attend regularly, and most of them did not grow up in church environments.

"The worship is best when visiting youth groups can be mentors," Rich says "The kids take their cues."

The worship service includes a concise eight-minute message. "You can accomplish more in eight minutes if you focus and require attention," Rich says.

After the service, the attendees eat a café-style meal—pizza or cheeseburgers, for example. Rich says he instructs volunteers to make an overabundance of food, avoiding the tendency to provide only an appropriate amount for each individual.

"Our goal is to have leftovers to give them to take home," Rich says, adding that children often ask for extras to take home with them.

During the meal, children practice serving food to one another, which is one of the ministry's goals—service.

"When children want to help and serve the food, we feel like we're getting somewhere," says Rich. "When one child is looking out for the interest of another, they are beginning to look beyond themselves."

Agora Ministries addresses the second goal, education, through an electronic school program that offers 10 computers and volunteers available to tutor the children.

According to Rich, the west side of Columbus struggles with a 59 percent high school-dropout rate.

"We don't have the funds or we would start a school," he says quickly. However, they hope to open a full-service child-care and learning center facility that cares for infants and up.

"The younger we start with children, the more influence we have with them," Rich says. "The longer the hours invested ... the further we get. When children are about 14 years old, you begin to see them slip into the values of their parents."

Agora tackles the work or job-training goal through an on-site kitchen in which children help prepare baked goods for three local coffee shops, a construction program to rehab houses and

on and work

PREFERRED ARBOR CARE

Eight-minute sermons: Rich Bartholomew speaks at kids' church at Agora Christian Ministries in Columbus, Ohio.

opportunities for children to help with chores at the church.

The children and youth receive compensation for their work. Some youth started saving their earnings, as volunteers encouraged them to keep money in envelopes at the church.

"These children don't get an allowance at home," Rich says. The construction program encourages young men not to deal drugs by offering another source of income, he says.

While anything goes on Saturday, Sunday is "family church," says Rich.

Children who want to come must agree to have a parental figure or older sibling to sit with. About 20 children attend.

Six households and a dozen young adults comprise the rest of the congregation.

Volunteers at Agora: More than 70 youth groups have visited Agora Ministries for four-day service-ministry experiences.

"They do a tremendous job with us, even if they don't feel like they do," Rich says. "They are also challenged themselves."

Some youth group members maintain ongoing relationships with the youth from Agora through emails and cards, which mean a lot to the youth, Rich says.

Another group of volunteers is about 25 Beachy Amish from Plain City, Ohio, who come to work with the children during the evenings. "They are a genuine piece of what Agora is doing in the inner city," Rich says.

A group of high school students and at-risk youth joined a group of Beachy Amish and traveled to Pass Christian, Miss., through Mennonite Disaster Service in February 2008.

"We had a great week down there," he says.

Additionally, eight full-time volunteers (four Americans and four Germans) also contribute to Agora Ministries' work. The German volunteers are through Agora Ministries' direct relationship with Christliche Dienste, a Christian service program of the German Mennonite Church.

A future goal for Agora is to further encourage adult Sunday school classes to visit and serve over a weekend. This fits the denominational goal to be a missional church, says Rich.

During Convention 2009, Agora Ministries is a service site for Servant Projects and will host 120 people per day.

For more information, go to www.agoraministries.org or email Josh@agoraministries.org or Rich@agoraministries.org.

Anna Groff is assistant editor of The Mennonite.

Agora Ministries also started a "Kids Help Kids" Vacation Bible School project. This provides the congregation's VBS attendees the opportunity to write to an Agora child and raise funds for food for Agora's Learning Center and Kids' Church. Call Rich at 614-226-7424 to receive a packet with a DVD.

Overcoming fear in a financial storm

Larry D. Miller is president and CEO of Mennonite Mutual Aid.

The financial turbulence and economic crisis experienced in our world in the past six to nine months has been described by some as the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Much has been said in the news about this fiscal storm, and it has become apparent that even the financial experts, economists and government officials are still sorting out what caused this international disaster and what strategies are needed to restore our economic health. There is a lack of trust in our fiscal system now, and without trust it does not work well.

Unfortunately, as Christians, we are not exempt from experiencing the effects of the economy. Many have experienced loss of employment, lost security in their retirement accounts, and some may be losing their homes through foreclosure. Our congregations and church institutions face declining offerings and are being forced to make spending cuts. Even though we may be living as faithful stewards, we are experiencing loss because of forces beyond our control.

This financial storm reminds me of the story of Jesus and his disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee in a boat when a great windstorm arose (Mark 4:36-41). The boat was becoming swamped by the storm while Jesus lay sleeping on a pillow in the stern of the boat. Fearful they would perish in the storm, the disciples finally awoke Jesus and said, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" After Jesus spoke to the sea and they experienced a great calm, he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

These economic times should also remind us that we may have been putting too much faith in the systems of this world and not relying on God. When things are going well financially, it's easy to take pride in our own wisdom and financial decisions. Now we realize the need to be more discerning in where we place our trust. Our financial decisions should be based on sound principles and trusted advice.

Recently, when an economist was asked what normal times will be like after the recession, he described the current situation as an economic heart attack. We know that life after a heart attack usually requires some lifestyle changes. There will be life after this economic heart attack, but it may require a change in our financial lifestyle. These times provide new opportunities for practicing faithful stewardship of God's resources, discovering new expressions of mutual aid in the faith community and joining in God's work of healing and hope in the world.

These times provide new opportunities for practicing faithful stewardship of God's resources.

God instructed Jeremiah to purchase a field from his uncle Hanamel (Jeremiah 32:7), even though they were facing defeat and deportation. The message was that "houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land" (Jeremiah 32:15). God called Jeremiah to make a faith declaration using a financial transaction. This is one of many examples from Scripture where we see financial transactions used as a tangible expression of faith. Life goes on, and we need to commit our financial lives to God's plan for our lives. My wife, Wilma, and I have completed a new stewardship plan with our financial advisor. By focusing on what God is calling us to do, our goals and decisions are focused on God's plan for our lives. Trusting in God and seeking new opportunities that align with our values helps us overcome our fears.

As followers of Jesus we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves. There are many needs around us, and God has given each of us resources to care for others in need. I hear many stories throughout our denomination of people responding to the needs of others in their congregations and communities. There are many opportunities for sharing our time, talents and money in meeting the needs of others. Building strong and healthy relationships can help us overcome adversities. These times provide us with new opportunities for joining in Jesus' work.

We do not know how long the recession will last or what we may face tomorrow or next year. Our faith in God reassures us that we have hope in the future. God is in control. No matter what happens to us, we can trust in God. TM

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Thoughts on abortion**—Debra Sapp-Yarwood
- **Messiness of 21st-century mission**—Jonathan Larson

Thomas nominee for moderator-elect

With delegate affirmation, Thomas begins after the 2009 Delegate Assembly.

The Mennonite Church USA leadership discernment committee announces J. Richard "Dick" Thomas (see photo) of Lancaster, Pa., as its nominee for moderator-elect of Mennonite Church USA. The Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly will receive the nomination at Convention 2009 June 30-July 5 in Columbus, Ohio. With the delegates' affirmation, Thomas will be elected to a four-year term, beginning after the 2009 Delegate Assembly. He will then spend the first two years as moderator-elect and chair of the Constituency Leaders Council, then succeed current moderator-elect Ed Diller as moderator for Mennonite Church USA after the 2011 Delegate Assembly in Pittsburgh. Sharon Waltner continues as moderator for Mennonite Church USA through the 2009 Delegate Assembly. The moderator chairs the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board.

"It excites me to think about being one small part of helping all the parts of our denomination work together with a common purpose of healing and hope, to make the difference that God is calling us to make in the world," Thomas says. "I see this as an opportunity to work with many gifted, talented people—staff, the Executive Board and leaders of conferences, agencies, schools and other institutions."

Thomas is employed by Lancaster Mennonite School as its superintendent; he has worked there in a variety of roles for the last 36 years. He also has been active within his area conference, Atlantic Coast Conference of Mennonite Church USA, with leadership roles as moderator and moderator-elect as well as serving as a member of its peace and justice committee. Thomas says that for him participation in local ministry is informed by being part of Mennonite Church USA and the denomination's missional priorities.

"As a result of my participation in Constituency Leaders Council meetings as moderator of Atlantic Coast Conference," Thomas says, "my life has grown richer as I've gotten to know conference moderators and ministers and gained a sense of the denomination striving to be missional by working against racism, looking for ways to join God's work and calling the gifts of women and men in ministry."

Thomas is dedicated to a vision of healing and hope as well as Mennonite Church USA's missional priorities of holistic witness, antiracism, leadership development and global connections. He says these priorities will empower all parts of the church to address the challenges the denomination faces and to share good news in a way that connects with the yearnings of many people in U.S. culture.

"The challenge is to have all parts of Mennonite Church USA—congregations, agencies, boards, conferences—move forward in that missional vision," says Thomas. "As we do that connecting with each other rather than as individuals in our own separate spheres, we're going to develop a synergy where each part encourages the other, and we're going to get farther ahead than if we were doing it alone."

As we [connect] with each other, . . . we're going to develop a synergy where each part encourages the other, and we're going to get farther ahead than if we were doing it alone.—Dick Thomas

Working as part of a team is important to Thomas, and his involvement in churchwide teams during the last five years has included chairing the Mennonite Schools Council and being a member of the Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., board of trustees and the search committee for the associate executive director of Mennonite Education Agency. He currently is a member of the Executive Board's executive director search committee.

Thomas earned both his bachelor's and master of education degrees at Pennsylvania State University in University Park, Pa. He also has completed graduate work in school administration at Temple University in Philadelphia and several biblical studies classes through EMU and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

Along with his wife, Joyce Hostetter Thomas, Thomas is a member of Ridgeview Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., where he has served as a Sunday school teacher and lay minister of the administration and ministry team.

"Mennonite Church USA is my spiritual home, nurtured through participation in congregations of Allegheny, Atlantic Coast and Lancaster conferences," Thomas says. "These congregations, along with Lancaster Mennonite School, have called me to a Christ-centered faith. Together they have provided a variety of leadership experiences that I hope will be helpful to the Executive Board and the denomination as we move forward in our missional calling, guided by the Holy Spirit."
—Marathana Prothro of Mennonite Church USA

1,016 students graduate in four MC USA colleges, universities and seminary

Eastern Mennonite Seminary
April 25
19 graduates

Three members of the Eastern Mennonite Seminary class of 2009 have followed in their families' footsteps in graduating from Eastern Mennonite University and from EMS, both in Harrisonburg, Va.

Linetta and Joel Ballew and Rene Hostetter joined 16 classmates receiving degrees at commencement ceremonies April 25.

Fifteen students, including Joel and Linetta, graduated with master of divinity degrees. One student graduated with a master of arts in religion degree, and Hostetter and two others graduated with master of arts in church leadership degrees.

Linetta and Joel Ballew may be the first couple with a family legacy of graduating from the university and the seminary.

Linetta's father, Robert Alley, graduated from EMS in 1972. Her mother, Linda Lefever Alley, graduated from EMU in 1973 and EMS in 2008. Both Linetta's brother and her sister and their spouses also graduated from EMU.

Linetta is working as program director for Brethren Woods, a Church of the Brethren camp near Keezletown, Va. Joel is pastor of Lebanon Church of the Brethren in Mt. Sidney, Va.

Rene also continues a family legacy. Her parents, Darrel and Sherill Hostetter, both graduated from EMU and EMS.

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

Luke Gascho

From left: Mallory Kuhn, Nayla Jiménez Cabezas and Todd Weston graduated with Goshen's first master's degrees in environmental education.

She is moving to Indianapolis, Ind., to take an associate pastor position at First Mennonite Church.

Linetta, Joel and Rene are among 10 students in the class under the age of 30.

Willard M. Swartley, professor emeritus of New Testament at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., addressed the graduating class.—*Laura Lehman Amstutz*

Eastern Mennonite University
April 26
464 graduates

Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., held its 91st commencement on the front lawn of campus on April 26. EMU President Loren Swartzendruber presented 348 undergraduate, 95 graduate, nine graduate certificates and 12 study and pastoral ministry certificates during the ceremonies.

In her address, Joyce Bontrager Lehman, a 1965 EMU alumna, spoke from her perspective as a program officer for microfinance with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's "Financial Services for the Poor" initiative, she said, "I believe that real lasting change occurs only at the grass roots, one person, one family, one village at a time."

Bontrager Lehman said this conviction was solidified for her after starting up a microcredit program for women in Kabul, Afghanistan.

"For every academic or technical field represented in this class, I can give examples of how your skills can be used to address critical global needs," she said, adding: "You are uniquely prepared [at EMU] to meet these needs."

The class of 2009 had 117 honors graduates—cum laude, magna cum laude and summa cum laude, including three students who finished with perfect 4.0 grade point averages.—*Jim Bishop*

Goshen College
April 26
236 graduates

Goshen (Ind.) College's class of 2009 consisted of 236 graduates—three of them candidates for master of arts degrees, 175 candidates for bachelor of arts degrees, 18 candidates for bachelor of science degrees and 40 candidates for bachelor of science in nursing degrees.

A highlight of this year's commencement on April 26 was the conferring of the college's first master's degrees. Three students—Mallory Kuhn of Spencerville, Ohio; Nayla Jiménez Cabezas of Cartago, Costa Rica; and Todd Weston of Lee's

Seminary graduates carry family legacy; three graduate with Goshen's first master's degrees; Bluffton bus accident survivor receives diploma.

Summit, Mo.—graduated with master's degrees in environmental education. The program is based at Goshen's Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center near Wolf Lake, Ind.

Commencement speaker Stephen Charles Ainlay based much of his address, "A Pilgrim's Mind," on *Mayflower*, a 2006 book by Nathaniel Philbrick about the Pilgrims. Ainlay grew up in Goshen, earned a bachelor's degree in sociology at Goshen College in 1973 and now is the president of Union College in Schenectady, N.Y.

"If you take seriously Goshen College's motto, 'Culture for Service,'" he said, "you will inevitably confront challenges, perhaps not as dramatic as those faced by the Pilgrims, but challenges nonetheless. The lesson we can all find in the Pilgrim experience is that those challenges—the headwinds and shoals of life—should be confronted with courage, perseverance and discernment."

The class included 15 graduates with double majors. Thirty-six students graduated with highest honors—grade point averages of 3.9 to a perfect 4.0. In addition, 90 others were on track to achieve GPAs of 3.60 and above. This commencement was the third consecutive year, after a break of four decades, that the college has recognized such academic honors.—*Richard Aguirre*

Bluffton University
May 3
297 graduates

Ronald J.R. Mathies, former longtime executive director of Mennonite Central Committee, spoke at Bluffton (Ohio) University's 109th commencement ceremony on May 3.

The ceremony was the culmination of the institution's annual May Day weekend, and 297 graduates were recognized—the second-largest class to leave Bluffton.

Prior to his speech, "Signposts of Security: Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges," commencement speaker Mathies was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters by the institution.

Mathies congratulated the graduating class on its achievements and noted they completed yet another step along the journey of lifelong learning.

He told graduates they are leaving Bluffton at an exciting yet sobering time, something Charles Dickens characterized in his day with the expression: "It was the best of times, with wisdom, light, hope and everything possible, and it was the worst of times, with darkness, despair and nothing possible"—an expression that holds true today.—*Jill A. Duling*

Bluffton University

Tim Berta (right), a survivor of the 2007 Bluffton baseball bus accident in Atlanta, celebrates after accepting his diploma from President James Harder. After two years of rehabilitation, Berta joined fellow graduates for the May Day ceremony on May 2 and walked across the stage on May 3. During the commencement welcome, President Harder paid tribute to Berta's fellow teammates David Betts, Bryan, Ohio, and Tyler Williams, Lima, Ohio, two members of the 2009 class who lost their lives in the same bus accident.—*Bluffton University*

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Lack of women leaders concerns MW USA

Mennonite Women USA retreat participants work at new vision statement.

Participants discussed what they perceive of a lack of women in leadership at the Mennonite Women USA (MW USA) strategic planning retreat March 27-28 at Amigo Centre, Sturgis, Mich.

Theologian Mary Shertz noted that within Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., fewer women are in leadership positions now than a decade ago, according to a recently completed AMBS self-study.

Theologian and author Elizabeth Soto added that women have a prophetic voice for the church that is being silenced.

Twila King Yoder, assistant to the president of Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., and MW USA board member, noted that women seemed to make progress for some time in the area of church leadership but the trend seems to be moving toward fewer women in ministry and leadership positions.

She speculated as to whether women are just "tired of pushing" or whether "we are not training and preparing for leadership roles in as great a number as we once did." Yoder asserted that some women are getting broken through this process and are saying, "I've been trying to use my gifts for the church, but if they are not valued in the church, I'll use them elsewhere."

A participant said all churchwide agency boards are chaired by men, while previously three were chaired by women.

Another participant said there are some women who say they don't want the Mennonite Women USA publication *Timbrel* "pushing radical issues," while others' vision for *Timbrel* is that the magazine actively create a space for women to enter into dialogue about issues women in the church want to discuss but are not given a place within the church to discuss.

Goshen (Ind.) College professor and MW USA board member Regina Shands Stoltzfus pointed out that this kind of programming will call women to "active" advocacy.

"Active advocacy is scary, lonely and takes a toll on those at the forefront. There is a backlash when people speak out against unjust structures," said Stoltzfus.

She asked, "How radical (that is, how willing to go to the root of unjust structures) is Mennonite Women USA willing to be? How much risk-taking are we willing to do? How willing are we not to be liked for what we are doing?"

Participants at the retreat ranged from ages 2 to 70. Twenty-five percent were underrepresented racial-ethnic people.

MW USA decided on the following mission statement: "Our mission at Mennonite Women USA is to empower and resource women and women's groups as we nurture our life in Christ, study the Bible, use our gifts, hear each other and engage in mission and service."

Participants also worked at a new vision statement for the coming three to five years. According to Rhoda Keener, MW USA executive director, that process will continue this summer.—*Patricia Burdette of Mennonite Women USA*

Active advocacy is scary, lonely and takes a toll on those at the forefront.
—Regina Shands Stoltzfus

Editor's note: A woman, Sharon Waltner, chairs the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board, which is not considered an agency board.

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Composer named outstanding alumnus

Former MMA CEO, clinical educator also receive Bethel College awards.

It's possible that more people know the music than the name of this year's outstanding alumnus at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan.—composer and arranger J. Harold Moyer.

For example, 10 hymns in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, used in many Anabaptist congregations in North America, bear Moyer's name as composer, arranger or tune harmonizer.

Moyer

Moyer went from Bethel College to George Peabody College in Nashville, Tenn., where he earned a master of music degree with a composition major in 1951. From 1951-55, he taught at Freeman (S.D.) Junior College and Freeman Academy and then went to the University of Iowa, where he completed his Ph.D. with a music composition major in 1957. From 1957-59, Moyer taught at Goshen (Ind.) College. Moyer began teaching at Bethel in 1959. He continued to compose and arrange as he had time. From 1960-67, Moyer was involved in developing *The Mennonite Hymnal*. Thirteen of the hymns in that hymnal contain an original Moyer tune or harmonization. Moyer retired from teaching at Bethel in 1992 and received professor emeritus status the same year. He continues to give individual instruction in composition at Bethel.

Brenneman

Howard Brenneman, this year's distinguished achievement award winner, devoted much of his successful business career to serving the Mennonite church. Brenneman, a native of Edmonton, Alta., graduated from Bethel College in 1963 with a B.A. in finance and business administration. Now retired in Lenexa, Kan., Brenneman served as president and chief executive officer of Mennonite Mutual Aid in Goshen, Ind., from 1991 to 2005. Even before graduating from Bethel, Brenneman went to work for Hesston (Kan.) Corporation, a farm machinery manufacturing company (now called AGCO), where he worked his way up from a position in accounting and finance to becoming president and chief operations officer, 1975-82, then president and CEO from 1982-86. Brenneman also started and served as president of American Medicorp, establishing drug and alcohol treatment centers in Wichita, Kan., Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Phoenix and Amarillo, Texas.

Schroeder

Gregg L. Schroeder received the Bethel Deaconess Hospital/Bethel College Nursing Alumni Association's outstanding alumnus award. Schroeder was on the Bethel College nursing faculty from 1992 to 2008 and a clinical nurse since 2002 for the medical/surgical intensive care unit at Galichia Heart Hospital in Wichita. He has a certificate in respiratory science from Aims College, Greeley, Colo., a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Wichita State University. *—Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*

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New bishop team for Philly installed

First Asian-American and African-American bishops in Philadelphia District

Richard Showalter

Taneera Motley, daughter of Alvin and Maxine Motley, performs a worship mime at the ordination.

More than 500 Mennonites and their friends gathered at the Way Thru Christ Community Fellowship in Philadelphia on April 26 to ordain and install a new Bishop Team for the Philadelphia District of Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference (LMC).

The team is Al Motley, pastor of Way Thru Christ; Tuyen Nguyen, pastor of Philadelphia Vietnamese Mennonite; Leonard Dow, pastor of Oxford Circle Mennonite; and Tim Darling, pastor of Norma (N.J.) Mennonite.

"We're so grateful they've been called and that they've responded," said Freeman Miller, bishop of the Philadelphia District, in his opening remarks. "They will serve in this oversight role in the district in addition to continuing their pastoral responsibilities."

Miller explained that after 15 years as bishop of the Philadelphia District, he plans to retire from bishop work June 30. The new team has already begun to accompany Miller to monthly bishop board meetings in Lancaster and to work as a team under his leadership.

As the new team lives into roles that give each man oversight of one quadrant of the old district, now divided up into Philadelphia North, Philadelphia Southwest, Chester and South Jersey, they will take turns chairing the monthly district meetings and attending the bishop board.

Weaver said that although LMC has had an African-American bishop in another district, Motley and Dow are the first in the Philadelphia District. Nguyen is the first Asian-American bishop to be called to serve in LMC.

"When I first realized this, it felt weighty," Nguyen said. "But now it doesn't feel so hard. Sometimes we Vietnamese Mennonites are tempted to get impatient because other Mennonites move so slowly [in church planting], but I tell my people, 'Germanic peoples are like diesel engines. They start slow, but they go the long haul. We need to learn from them.' "

Miller said that while many of the churches in the district had been started with assistance from Eastern Mennonite Missions, it's a brand new day.

EMM is still available for consultation and assistance, but many of the Philadelphia Mennonite churches are initiating their own church plants.

"This is a significant moment in the life of these churches," Miller said. "There's a new sense of belonging and ownership. It's long overdue. When I see the beauty in what has happened, I'm eagerly anticipating my retirement."

During the service, the choir and dance team from Way Thru Christ and the choir from the Vietnamese Mennonite Church performed along with a surprise appearance by mime artist, Taneera Motley (Al's daughter), who brought her father to his feet.—*Jewel Showalter of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

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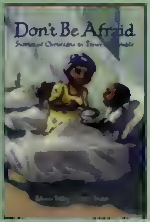

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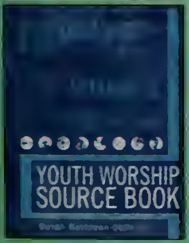

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- **fax 574-535-6050**
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CALENDAR

First Mennonite Church of Pretty Prairie, Kan., will celebrate her ***125th Anniversary Aug. 8-9***. If you have been associated with First Mennonite of Pretty Prairie is some way, we would love to have you join us for the celebration. The schedule of events and a registration form for meals can be found at the church Web site: www.fmcprettyprairie.org. For more information contact the church at 620-459-6344 or fmpp@embarqmail.com.

Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., www.waterfordchurch.org, will celebrate its ***50th anniversary Oct. 9-11***, using the theme Pillars Along the Way. Former attenders and any other interested individuals are invited to join the congregation in remembering the past, celebrating the present and looking to the future. Anyone wishing to receive updates via mail or email should contact the church at wmc@waterfordchurch.org or 574-533-5642.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Forry, Sebastian Jeriah, April 17, to Steve and Colleen Forry, Mount Joy, Pa.

Gingerich, Carson David, April 19, to Ryan and Alison Harrison Gingerich, Elkhart, Ind.

Miller, Aubrianna Grace, April 22, to Lydell and Ruth Miller, Sugarcreek, Ohio.

Miller, Trey Ryan, April 18, to Ryan E. and Pam Miller Miller, Hartville, Ohio.

Shelly, Caleb Isaac, April 11, to Mark and Amy Sommers Shelly, Uniontown, Ohio.

MARRIAGES

Carter/Hartman: Tina Carter, Mishawaka, Ind., and Adam Hartman, Goshen, Ind., April 24, at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Erb/Yoder: Lola Faye Bontrager Erb, Wellman, Iowa, and Bob Yoder, Phoenix, Ariz., April 11, at a rural chapel in Wellman.

Fletcher/Good: Allison Fletcher, Broadway, Va., and Timothy Good, Woodstock, Vt., April 18, at Zion Mennonite Church, Broadway.

Herman/Miller: Anne Herman, Sugarcreek, Ohio, and Andrew Miller, Sugarcreek, April 18, at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church, Walnut Creek, Ohio.

DEATHS

Bender, Geneva Joyce Gingerich, 66, Middlebury, Ind., died March 23 while awaiting a liver transplant. Spouse: Eugene Bender. Parents: Ezra and Gladys Bontrager Gingerich. Children: Debra Smith, Darin, Sheila Hostetler, Crystal Christner; 10 grandchildren. Funeral: March 28 at First Mennonite Church, Middlebury.

Boshart, Walter Lorain, 96, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 27. Spouse: Beverly Miller Boshart. Parents: Amos and Abbie Scott Boshart. Children: Jean Stucky, James, Richard, Lane Lewallen. Funeral: March 2 at Yoder Culp Funeral Home, Goshen.

Detweiler, Grace Mininger Hedrick, 84, Souderton, Pa., died April 18 of respiratory failure due to cancer. Spouse: Lester F. Detweiler (deceased). Parents: Robert S. and Katie Mininger Hedrick. Children: Linda Gehman, Dale, Dennis; eight grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 21 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.

Ebersole, Dorothy Alvera Book, 95, Sterling, Ill., died April 28. Spouse: Everett Roy Ebersole. Parents: Oscar D. and Lottie P. Detweiler Book. Children: Nancy Ebersole, Marcia Jackson, Sharon Graybill, Janice Calsyn, Verne; 17 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 2 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling.

Egli, Ida, 94, Kalona, Iowa, died April 8. Parents: C.B. and Emma Grimm Egli. Funeral: April 20 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Eitzen, Lena B. Baerg, 85, Mountain Lake, Minn., died May 3 of complications of Alzheimer's disease. Spouse: Alvin D. Eitzen (deceased). Parents: Henry M. and Elisabeth Rohn Baerg. Children: Angela Rempel, Liz Rempel, Barbara Busenitz, Howard; 13 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 7 at Lakeview Gospel Church, Mountain Lake.

Freed, Matilda K. Godshall, 97, Souderton, Pa., died April 26 of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Joseph H. Freed (deceased). Parents: William S. and Sallie M. Koffel Godshall. Children: Doris Freed, Merrill, Jean Clemmer, Nancy Alderfer; 10 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 30 at Souderton Mennonite Homes Chapel.

Geiser, Leonard, 78, Kidron, Ohio, died April 22 following a short illness. Spouse: Nada Geiser. Parents: William and Clara Geiser. Children: Randy, Jim, Tammi Rex; four grandchildren. Funeral: April 27 at Kidron Mennonite Church.

Gerber, Kathryn Elderene Bame, 93, Bluffton, Ohio, died April 20. Spouse: Robert Gerber (deceased). Parents: Sam and Sara Diller Bame. Children: David, Marjorie Closson, Karen Gerber. Funeral: April 23 at Chiles and Sons Laman Funeral Home, Bluffton.

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Gingerich, Ivo Lewis, 82, Colorado Springs, Colo., died April 20. Spouse: Ada Gingerich. Parents: Daniel and Fannie Jantz Gingerich. Children: Loren, Merlin, Grace Ernst, Rosalie Hoover, Linda Livengood; 12 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: April 25 at Memorial Gardens Chapel, Colorado Springs.

Hackman, Ada Alderfer Clemens, 101, Edmonton, Alberta, died March 24 of pneumonia and congestive heart failure. Spouse: Linford Derstine Hackman (deceased). Parents: Gared A. and Lizzie Alderfer Clemens. Children: Twila Steckly, Lowell, James, Martyne Kenpel, Arlin, Leon; five grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. A private memorial service will be held on July 11 in Cochrane, Alberta.

Kennel, Mae Etta Hershberger, 81, Albany, Ore., died April 10 of cancer. Spouse: Willard Peter Kennel. Parents: Allen and Katie Beckler Hershberger. Children: Russel, Rachel Hickman, Julia Miller, Janine Rands, Lori Jamison; 10 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Celebration of Life: April 16 at Albany Mennonite Church.

Marin, Eugene Wilford, 80, Dinuba, Calif., died April 18. Spouse: Bertha Fast Martin. Parents: Emile and Gertrude Martin. Children: Evan, David, Linda Faust; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 24 at Dopkins Funeral Chapel, Dinuba.

Miller, Arthur David, 95, Louisville, Ohio, died April 18. Spouse: Velma Margaret Johns Miller (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Mary Goldsmith Miller. Children: Janet Sommers, Frederic, Dr. John K.; nine grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 22 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

Schmucker, Arline L. Sommers, 88, Louisville, Ohio, died April 24. Spouse: Wilbur Schmucker (deceased). Parents: John and Bertha Taylor Sommers. Children: Edna Troyer, Velma Bridges, Lloyd, Dr. M. Lee, 10 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 29 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

Schloneger, Irene E. Falb, 93, Orrville, Ohio and Louisville, Ohio, died April 28. Spouse: Irvin L. Schloneger (deceased). Parents: David and Martha Baumgartner Falb. Children: Catherine Hochstetler, Robert, Sandra Brenneman, Faye Breneman, David, Keith; 14 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 1 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

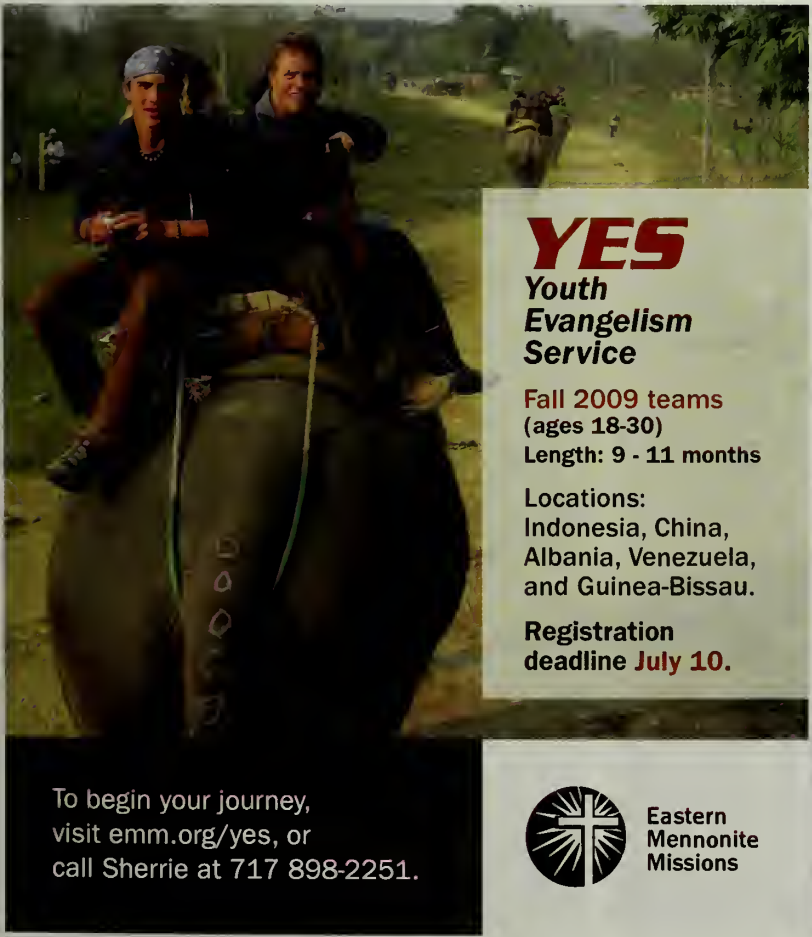
Schrock, Raymond Y., 87, Goshen, Ind., died April 2. Spouse: Cora E. Yoder Schrock. Parents: Yost and Tillie Miller Schrock. Children: Julie A. Gunden, Janet S. Carney, Gail K. Neumann, Marcia J. Hershberger, W. Alan, Timothy R., Meril D.; 13 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 6 at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Ind.

Stork, Helen King, 73, Ventura, Calif., died April 22. Spouse: Bill Stork (deceased). Parents: Elbert and Goldie Grove King. Memorial service: May 9 at First Methodist Church, Ventura.

Waltner, Erland, 94, Elkhart, Ind., died April 12. Spouse: Winifred Schlosser Waltner. Parents: Ben J. and Emma P. Miller Waltner. Children: Mary Adams, Irene Nadon, Kathleen Waltner-Toews, Rose Graber; seven grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: April 17 at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary chapel, Elkhart.

Zimmerman, Ursula B. Denlinger, 86, Stevens, Pa., died April 17. Spouse: Titus N. Zimmerman (deceased). Parents: Martin and Emma Burkhart Denlinger. Children: Robert, Mark, Roy, Clair, Marie Miller, Sharon Good; 28 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 22 at Ephrata Mennonite Church, Ephrata, Pa.

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.



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Homestead Mennonite Church, located in South Florida, seeks a ***full-time, bilingual (English and Spanish) lead pastor*** with a heart for outreach and community involvement. The congregation believes that the kingdom of God consists of people of every language group, class and race and envisions a pastor who is called to join our church community as one of us, helping us complete the transition from a traditional Mennonite mission church to a vital, redemptive, Anabaptist congregation that represents and reflects the local growing, diverse community. For more information, contact Drane Reynolds at 305-662-6990 or wdrane@hotmail.com.

Eastern Mennonite Missions seeks a ***part-time representative to East Asia and Australia*** to oversee missionaries and programs. Required: five years cross-cultural experience and supervisory skills. Begins July 1, 2009; application deadline May 22. Contact Jeanette Hunt at jeanetteh@emm.org or 717-898-2251.

Albuquerque Mennonite Church, a growing urban congregation, seeks ***half-time associate pastor for youth ministry***. Desired candidate will work with lead pastor in Christian formation, is committed to Christ's way of peace and justice, is grounded in the Anabaptist tradition and willing to actively encourage and teach our youth. Candidate will understand dynamics of urban youth environment, advocate Mennonite higher education and connections to the larger church. For full position description and contact information visit www.abqmennonite.org.

Goshen College seeks program ***director/instructor for growing American Sign Language and interpreting major/minor*** to begin fall semester of the 09-10 academic year. Responsibilities include teaching upper-level ASL-English interpreting and related courses, oversight of internships and continued program development. Ph.D. preferred, master's degree required, in linguistics, education, sign language interpreting or related field; multicultural experience preferred; ASLTA certification or working toward certification. To apply, see position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment. Goshen College, an affirmative action employer, is a liberal arts institution affiliated with Mennonite Church USA.

Pleasant Lake Mennonite Church, located in northeast Indiana, is seeking a ***full-time pastor*** to direct the church's children/youth ministry. Send resumés to plmchurch@gmail.com.

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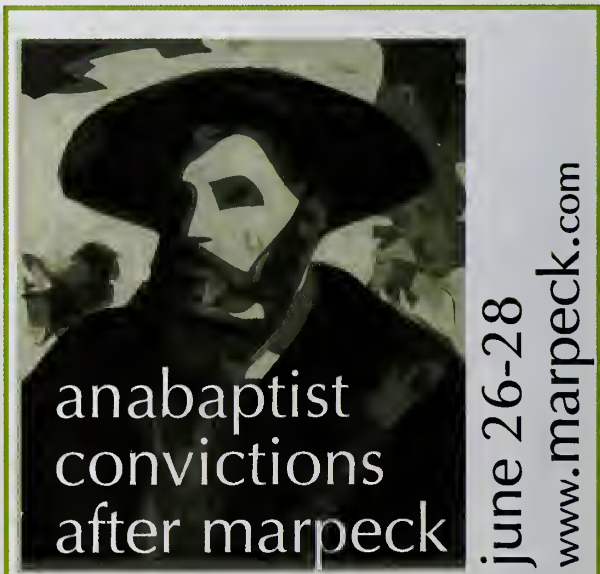

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Highland Retreat in Bergton, Va., is seeking candidates for the position of ***executive director*** to begin in or near December 2009. Nestled in the mountains of western Virginia, Highland offers many outdoor activities, operates summer camping programs for youth, a lodge and retreat center for groups and is affiliated with the Virginia Mennonite Conference. Candidates should have leadership experience in a Christian camp or not-for-profit organization, experience in program development and/or strategic planning, strong interpersonal skills, visionary leadership attributes and a living Christian faith. The executive director is responsible to oversee camp operations, finances and staff, and work closely with the board of directors, donors and constituency. Please send cover letter, resumé and three letters of reference (one from pastor) to: Chair, Search Committee, Highland Retreat, c/o 61 S. Main St., Harrisonburg, VA 22801; www.highlandretreat.org.

Goshen College seeks applicants for a ***full-time nursing faculty member*** to teach psychiatric/mental health nursing courses in the classroom and clinical setting. The ideal candidate will bring significant experience in nursing practice and nursing education. Doctorate in nursing or doctoral candidate preferred, master's degree in nursing required. For further details and to apply, see the position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment. Goshen College, an affirmative action employer, is a liberal arts institution affiliated with Mennonite Church USA.

Copies of *The Mennonite*'s Feb. 3 issue on national identity are still available for congregational study before Mennonite Church USA's Convention 2009 in Columbus, Ohio. To order, call 800-790-2498 or email subscriptions@themennonite.org Cost is $2 each for 3-20 copies and $1/each for 20 or more copies.

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The transendence of art

Gordon Houser

While many of us tend to view our faith in terms of verbalized belief, we often experience faith in ways that transcend language or thought. Art in a broad sense (painting, sculpture, music, poetry and other forms) often affects our emotions, our bodies, our lives in ways we cannot describe.

Daniel A. Siedell, an art historian and critic, helps us explore this insight into faith in his book *God in the Gallery: A Christian Embrace of Modern Art* (BakerAcademic, 2008, $24.99). He seeks to follow Eastern Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann's observation that "a Christian sees Christ everywhere."

Siedell refers to Paul's address to the Athenians (Acts 17:22-23) about their altar to "an unknown God." Paul discerned that their culture's worship of an unknown God was really a desire for the true God, revealed in Jesus Christ.

God in the Gallery looks at contemporary art in a similar vein—not, however, to find Christian messages. Instead it seeks to experience "the aesthetic presence of much of modern and contemporary art" and recognize that art is "a distinctive mode of cognition and knowledge about the world." In other words, art is not a verbal communication of ideas but "requires contemplation that focuses attention on the viewer developing a relationship with the work of art."

Siedell traces the origins of modern, abstract art to Christianity's use of icons. Perhaps unknown to most Mennonites—and many other Christians—is that the Council of 787 in Nicaea, the last ecumenical council of the church, affirmed the use of icons in worship. Siedell writes: "Nicene Christianity does not merely tolerate images in the church. It *requires* them."

Icons are not realistic portrayals of their subjects. Instead they are means of honoring the person imaged ("icon" means image). "Icons are a window through which the spiritual can be experienced in matter," Siedell writes. "They discipline sight as we look at the world through the eyes of faith."

All cultures employ art in some form. This signifies humanity's desire for the transcendent, a reality beyond ourselves and our world. As humans, we desire communion with God, whether or not we call it that. Many who deny religious belief seek transcendence through art.

Siedell notes similarities of religion and art: "Christianity is not merely a doctrine, nor is art merely an object. Both are expansive practices that generate objects and doctrine but cannot be exclusively defined by them."

He then examines examples of contemporary art, particularly Enrique Martinez Celaya's *Thing and Deception*. The book includes illustrations of this and other works; unfortunately, they are reproduced in black and white. (Siedell recommends reading the book in conjunction with a good art history textbook with plenty of high-quality illustrations. That would be nice.)

Siedell defines art criticism as "an attempt to understand and articulate a particular experience with art in a particular way." He laments that "most Christian commentators rarely address modern art on its own terms." Such criticism requires time and effort.

This is true of other art forms as well, from film to fiction. We may experience certain reactions to a piece but fail to fully understand or appreciate that experience. "The challenge," Siedell writes, "is to experience art's transcendence, not simply to *interpret* it, *decode* it or *define* it."

This is true for our worship as well. We want to experience, not define, God.

Art is neglected not only in our society but in our churches. In late April I attended an art show by Goshen (Ind.) College students. We have many Mennonite artists among us but too often ignore them. Such neglect may derive in part from our tendency to define our faith in our heads rather than experience it.

The reviews below are available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

FILMS

The Soloist (PG-13), based on a true story, illustrates the power of friendship between a journalist and a homeless musician struggling with mental illness. The film explores the complexities surrounding homelessness, for example why someone might choose to live on the streets. Not all the scenes portraying the thoughts of a schizophrenic convinced me, but the incredible cello solos and soundtrack compensated for any shortcomings.—*Anna Groff*

Earth (G) uses stunning photography to show the teeming complexity of animal and plant life on Earth. James Earl Jones' narration follows three families—of polar bears, elephants and humpback whales—as they seek survival in increasingly unfriendly environments. The film shows the effects of global warming but does not dwell on it.—*gh*

BOOKS

God Does Not ... Entertain, Play Matchmaker, Hurry, Demand Blood, Cure Every Illness, edited by D. Brent Laytham (Brazos Press, 2009, $17.99), includes essays by theologians who challenge misconceptions of how God works in the world. Laytham's concluding essay on the Trinity emphasizes that "God does who God is." He offers an alternative to careless speech and sloppy thinking about God and concludes: "God offers us a participation in the divine doing that is God's eternal communion."

Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness by Stanley Hauerwas and Jean Vanier (InterVarsity Press, 2008, $15) grew out of conversations between theologian Hauerwas and Vanier, founder of the L'Arche communities. The book concludes: "L'Arche helps us begin to see what peace looks like."

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Everett J. Thomas

Mennonite Church USA's identity

What does it mean to be a peace church in this country when the military-industrial complex has the federal government in a stranglehold? This question relates to a discussion scheduled at this summer's Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009: our identity as Mennonite citizens in the United States.

The issue emerged from the delegates two years ago at the convention in San José, Calif. But in the intervening two years, not much has happened with the issue. That may change soon.

"Defense Secretary Robert Gates has submitted a radically sane Pentagon budget," writes Joe Klein in the May 4 issue of *Time*, "which eliminates some unneeded weapons systems—and is likely to be eviscerated by members of Congress from districts where those systems are built."

It would not dilute our peace witness against all war to weigh in on matters like this. Because our country will never give up its weapons is no reason to do and say nothing.

U.S. military spending per year is $711 billion, while China's is $122 billion and Russia's is $70 billion. Iran and North Korea combined spend $12.1 billion each year.

Our identity is wrapped up in a country that spends obscene amounts of money on its military machine.

The $711 billion annual spending on the military compares with $38 billion for K-12 education, $19 billion for humanitarian foreign aid and $6.8 billion for children's health care. We published these numbers from www.truemajority.com in our April 21 News Digest.

It seems naive to think that Mennonite Church USA, with slightly more than 100,000 members. could confront this massive problem. But once again: We are not called to be effective; we are called to be faithful.

The Boise (Idaho) Mennonite Fellowship modeled this kind of faithfulness on Good Friday. Members of this congregation initiated a vigil outside the gates of the Mountain Home Air Force Base 50 miles southeast of Boise. The 20 people who participated included Catholics and Quakers. The reason for the vigil: Supersonic F-15E jets from the base regularly carry out ground attack missions in Afghanistan.

This base is an important source for the local economy. During an economic depression as severe as we are experiencing now, it takes extraordinary resolve to call for reduction in an activity that provides so many jobs. But acquiescing to that reality is making a deal with the Devil—a Faustian bargain.

It is also difficult to say the same thing in northern Indiana, where the jobless rate is especially high. The Hummer plant in Mishawaka, Ind., continues to produce Hummers for military use and provides steady jobs in a local economy where devastation to the recreational vehicle industry has created one of the country's highest unemployment rates.

Our identity as U.S. Mennonites is wrapped up in a country that spends obscene amounts of money producing the military machine—some of it irrelevant to the tactics used by those fighting against this country. In the meantime, the person responsible for all these programs, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, appears defenseless against a budgeting process that leaves budget decisions in the hands of elected representatives.

It is understandable if our sisters and brothers in the global Mennonite family assume we accept this situation if we say nothing and quietly pay our taxes. But if we want to redefine our national identity, where better to raise questions about the way our taxes our being misused?

In the last biennium we have launched The Corinthian Plan, an effort to provide health insurance for all Mennonite pastors and church workers in Mennonite Church USA. During the next biennium, why not focus on U.S. defense spending? We could call it the "Roman Plan"—a churchwide effort to confront the military-industrial empire that controls our lives as the Roman Empire did in Jesus' day.—*ejt*

This editorial is available as a podcast at www.The Mennonite.org

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June 2, 2009

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The meanings of dialogue

James Schrag is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

In 36 years of congregational and churchwide leadership I have observed that all of us are human in our behaviors, especially in church. I have often questioned whether congregational life is dominated by sociology more than theology. We tend to underrate our fallen, fragile natures in addressing spiritual issues. I don't want to create a false dichotomy between the human and the spiritual. I don't want to be flippant in labeling our behaviors. Let me explain the sociology, not the theology, I have seen.

Take our understanding of "dialogue" in the church. The New Testament does not commend dialogue as a fruit of the Spirit. It tells stories about it, like the Jerusalem Conference in Acts.

I hear people wonder if we have too much dialogue in the church. They say we need more proclamation. Others fret that dialogue has disappeared altogether. If you feel something needs changing, you naturally want to talk about it. If you believe things should stay put, you may feel uncomfortable or even threatened by exchanges of viewpoint. This is about biblical interpretation, too. This is not new. We might dust off our churchwide statement on agreeing and disagreeing in love: www.MennoniteUSA.org/disagreeing.

I see four expectations of dialogue. Depending on the issue, we may switch categories.

1. One group expects dialogue to air their minority viewpoint. Dialogue, they hope, will be a platform to promote their point of view or interpretation of Scripture. They aim to convince others by their conviction, logic or display of numbers.

2. Another group views dialogue as a tool to preserve fellowship in the church. If we just keep talking about it, we will stay in relationship with each other. Preserving community is important. It's biblical, too. They listen well and are accepting but don't often change their minds. For this group, dialogue may be an end to preserve relationships.

3. A third group claims high ideals about dialogue. It is a way to take seriously the work of the Holy Spirit, who chooses to speak through anyone, minority or majority, revealing what Scripture means. This group believes in "mutual accountability": that we all acknowledge our different beliefs and biblical interpretations, that everyone agree to be open to changing their viewpoint as a result of dialogue, that we even remain open to conversion to what we now say we disagree with. I have not met many of this group.

4. Another group feels that dialogue is suspect at best and unfaithful at worst. There are beliefs and behaviors, based in Scripture, that we need to uphold, not question. Dialogue exposes our weakness of conviction or uncertainty about what Scripture says. What's more, the consequences of certain viewpoints or actions are all too obvious.

Everyone in these groups loves Jesus and the church. All value Scripture. But in our humanity we hold different views of dialogue, and sometimes we switch groups. When we overlook our human tendencies, exchange of sincere views can misfire. Then we may be tempted to resort to other means to protect the church from error or encourage change, both of which are always based on high purposes and often on Scripture. Human frailty is present in our attempts to communicate, perhaps especially about the beliefs we hold dear.

When you find yourself in a conflict about convictions, ask yourself to which group you belong and to which the other belongs. Ask the Holy Spirit to be a voice in your conversation. Then it is more likely our human natures can move us closer to what we want to practice: a spirituality that is a winsome and effective witness for Jesus.

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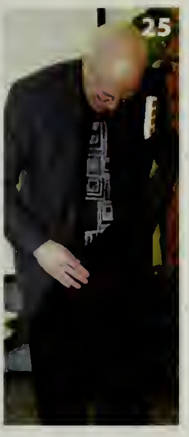
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Rejects business model assumptions

Thank you for printing Ernest Hershberger's article, "The Business of Church" (May 5). He makes some important points. I particularly appreciate his emphasis on the importance of grace as an organizing principle in the life of the church.

I disagree, however, with his apparent assumption that there is a single clear model that all businesses follow. For example, many business leaders would disagree with his opening statement, that "the business of business is to return a profit for shareholders or owners." Many leaders would say that profit is a by product of a healthy business that provides a needed good or service.

In a similar manner, I disagree with his assumption that "the vision for the enterprises comes from the person (or people) in control." The best leaders draw out a vision for the enterprise from the people in the organization and hesitate to impose a vision onto the organization.

A third point of disagreement is his assumption that business leaders use coercion to get things done. Effective leaders know there are huge downside risks to leading by coercion. Blind obedience is antithetical to creative problem solving.

Finally I am troubled by the idea that business practice is only applicable to the "congregation's more mundane processes." Maybe I am just a hypersensitive business professor, but I find it hard to believe that many business people see themselves only as having skills and talent to bring to the management of "mundane processes."

I will accept that there are some money-hungry, tyrannical leaders who have, at least in the short run, been financially successful. I will not accept that such behavior is necessary or even desirable for business success. Business practice, whatever that is, cannot be the ultimate authority for the church. In fact, I hope the business practice that Hershberger is describing is not the ultimate authority for business either.—*George Lehman, Bluffton, Ohio*

Do what you love, and the money will follow

As a business person, I must take issue with Ernest Hershberger's statement, "The business of business is to return a profit for shareholders or owners" ("The Business of Church," May 5). In fact, the business of business is to produce goods or deliver services for sufficient reward that the business remains viable. A business that loses focus on its primary purpose will not survive. For example, if I am in the business of making pies but focus excessively on making money, I will forget the pure ingredients, time and attention necessary to make a delicious pie—and likely will cease to be profitable.

"Do what you love, and the money will follow," is a much more reliable precept for business success than, "Focus on the bottom line." After five years of running a hospice that is highly successful—in terms of providing compassionate care to dying patients and a congenial working environment for dedicated professionals but only minimally successful in terms of financial rewards to the owners—I am inclined to say that my business is no less an ongoing work of the Holy Spirit than is the business of church.—*Cathy Conrad, Albuquerque, N. M.*

Sex offenders not all created equal

I am so excited to hear the church and *The Mennonite* is addressing issues regarding sexual offenders, victims and the church. As a victim of exposure to sexuality on a dysfunctional level from about age 5 off and on to now—inside state-run hospitals, group homes and psychiatric placements—I'm grateful to know people are slowly opening their hearts.

As a sexual offender in my adult life, I know all too well isolation, rejection and loneliness. Many people often don't realize that hatred and rejection further complicate issues for rehabilitation and reintegration into society, which may lead to re-offense.

All sexual offenders are not created equal with respect to their pasts and present. For me, my problem is sexual boundaries and sexual addiction with adults and teenagers. I attract easily to dys-

IN THIS ISSUE

The cover story in this issue addresses abortion. But what kind of art is appropriate for the subject? Dee Birkey, our designer, created the cover and says, "I chose the image of the doll because, for me, it represents a vulnerable stage of development; vulnerability is a recurring theme in this issue's feature articles." In her "Thoughts on Abortion," Debra Sapp-Yarwood describes herself as a "nonconceptionist" and says, "The language of 'pro-choice' vs. 'pro-life' fails us. It suggests that people on opposing sides are antichoice or antilife, which is ridiculous" (page 9). The issue appears different from Jonathan Larson's point of view: A "missional friend" had to accompany a poor woman when she got an abortion because she was already unable to care for her three children (page 11). Jennifer Drago says, "For women with unwanted pregnancies to choose life, they need … forgiveness and acceptance; practical help with daily life; honest talk on responsibility, relationships and birth control; financial help; a way to contribute and improve [their situations] and a community of caring people to belong to" (page 13).—*Editor* functional and unhealthy friends and so-called support systems. It's hard to change all this when surrounded by the same dysfunctional people—often because more healthy people reject you. In fact, I'm regularly abandoned by members of the church and other Christians. It takes a lot of dysfunctional people, places and things that lead us to being a victim and often later a perpetrator. It then takes a lot of healthy people, places, things—including compassion, love and forgiveness—to help lead us home. For some of us it's too late; for others we are just being reborn again.—*Mark Brull, Larned, Kan.*

Child protection connection

I appreciated Anna Groff's article and editorial in the April 21 issue about churches ministering to sex offenders. That's an important subject and one we really need to grapple with if we are to be missional people.

The other part of the conversation is that churches need frequent reminders about how to make their churches and programs places that are as safe as possible from sexual predators. Julie Prey-Harbaugh, a member of one of our congregations, has developed a consulting business (that grew out of a request from Franconia Conference) called, "One Childhood Consulting"). The URL is http://onechildhoodconsulting.com/default.aspx.

Julie and a couple other women will be presenting seminars in Columbus, Ohio, at Convention 2009 on various aspects of the theme. Perhaps some future issue of *The Mennonite* could feature something on child protection.—*Gay Brunt Miller, director of collaborative ministries, Franconia Mennonite Conference*

Disassociating with Mennonite Church USA

In the May 19 issue, Dick Thomas says, "Mennonite Church USA is my spiritual home, nurtured through participation in congregations" ("Thomas Nominee for Moderator-Elect"). This comment—part of Thomas' statement in contemplating his up coming role in Mennonite Church USA—also resonates with me and the position in which my wife and I find ourselves at present. We find ourselves floundering as our home congregation has voted to disassociate with Mennonite Church USA.

We love our brothers and sisters in that fellowship but find ourselves seeking fellowship in the larger body of Mennonites. It is a lonely journey, and we wonder if our search is right. Or should we remain in relationship with friends with whom, for the most part, we agree in love? We want to see Mennonites come together in unity but find ourselves following the path of separation looking for unity.—*Richard Boshart, Lebanon, Pa.*

Deliberately killing an unborn child is wrong

In response to Paul H. Martin's letter ("Saving the Fetus Is Also Violence," May 19), I do not advocate showing preference toward saving an unborn child at the expense of the mother. Sometimes unborn children survive abortions. In life-threatening pregnancies I believe in making an equal effort toward saving both lives.

When I said, "Abortion is always wrong," I meant deliberately killing the unborn child is always wrong. So I advocate trying to save both lives rather than saving either life at the expense of the other. In the process of trying to do this one of the lives may die, but this should never be the intention.—*Jerry C. Stanaway, Lombard, Ill.*

The magazine business

Regarding the editorial in the May 5 issue: I want to hail the admirable vision Everett Thomas displays in "The Church and the Magazine Business." Thomas is simply claiming a rightful place in the work of the kingdom while avoiding defensiveness. As my parents would have said, "May the Lord bless you real good!"—*J.B. Shenk, Goshen, Ind.*

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

The terms "pro choice" and "pro life" are: (43 votes)

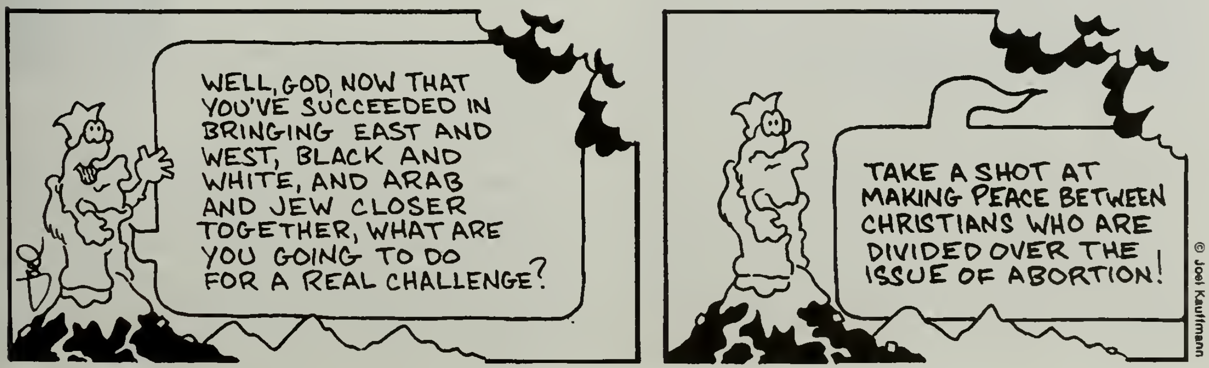
○ Not helpful (72%)

○ Helpful (23%)

○ Not sure (5%)

Check out the new poll question at www. TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**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IN BRIEF

Forgive us our debts

After the U.S. Senate voted to prohibit judges from changing the terms of mortgages for people filing for bankruptcy, Ron Lieber surveyed some religious insights on debt. He found that Jewish, Christian and Muslim scriptures all have something to say on the subject. A passage in the Qur'an is particularly salient; it says that if a debtor is having difficulty making repayment, the debtor should be given more time to repay the debt. During this grace period the interest clock should cease ticking and fees shouldn't be added so the debtor can get back on his or her feet.—*The New York Times*

What is Google's damage?

Surfing the Internet harms the ozone layer, according to Harvard environmentalist Alex Wissner-Gross, reports *The Guardian Weekly*. "Google operates huge data centers around the world that consume a great deal of power," he explains in a new study of the environmental impact of computing. He calculates that two Google searches generate as much power as boiling water for a cup of coffee.—*The Marketplace*

OurFaith Digest goes on hiatus

GOSHEN, Ind.—The free magazine called *OurFaith Digest* goes on hiatus June 30. Published by The Mennonite, Inc., the magazine will no longer distribute either a print version or an electronic version until a new business plan can make the enterprise sustainable.

"Though we had hoped that putting *OurFaith Digest* on the Web would save enough money to make the project viable," said editor Joe Miller on May 19, "the corresponding across-the board-crash in donations and advertising has brought the online magazine to an end."

OurFaith Digest was published by an independent board until 2007. In 2008, it transferred its assets to The Mennonite, Inc., which published three issues that year. The Spring 2009 issue was the fourth and last print issue, distributed in April. One more electronic version (ezine) will be published in mid-June.—*Everett J. Thomas*

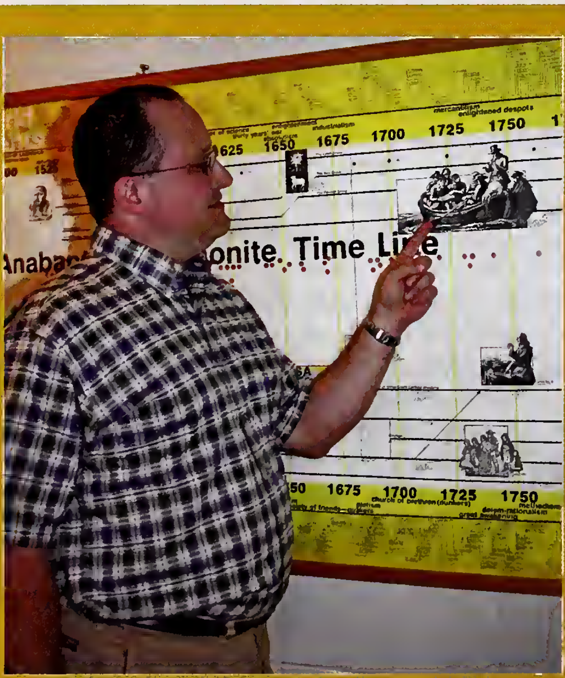
Bluffton University reduces operation budget

BLUFFTON, Ohio—Bluffton University has announced reductions in its operations budget for 2009-10, including $350,000 in personnel and programs.

The reductions in employment include the retirement of two staff members in the library and in the building and grounds department and the resignation of two faculty members in the science department and in the Pathways to Mission and Vocation program. Those positions will not be filled. In addition, one faculty nontenure track position in the education department and two staff positions in the education department and financial aid office will be eliminated. Several other staff positions have changes in responsibilities, and a grant-funded position will be phased out as the program ends.

To reduce its program budget, the university will eliminate four academic majors that have had low enrollment in recent years. Students currently enrolled in the affected academic majors—computer science, information systems, family and consumer science education and family studies—will be able to complete their degrees at Bluffton, but these majors will no longer be available to new students. In addition, beginning with the 2009-10 academic year, Bluffton will no longer offer men's and women's tennis as varsity sports.

These coordinated actions will reduce the university's operations budget by more than $350,000 next year. An additional $120,000 reduction will be realized in the subsequent year, from a total university operating budget of $32 million. Bluffton had already reduced nonpersonnel expenditures during the previous two academic years before considering reductions in personnel.—*Bluffton University*



Everett J. Thomas

New Anabaptist Mennonite timeline created

Rich Preheim, director for MC USA's Historical Committee, points to a *Martyr's Mirror* illustration on the "Anabaptist Mennonite Time Line" published in 1986 by Faith and Life Press. Preheim and others around the world provided consultation for a group from the Netherlands that has created a new timeline. See the insert in this issue.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Norr turned tasks into cause for celebration

Carol Norr

ELKHART, Ind.—During her 44 years of service with Mennonite agencies, Carol Norr's roles were ostensibly about administration and finances. Despite the job descriptions, she made her tasks about celebration and relationships. Norr, 68, of Berne, Ind., died May 12, in the Swiss Village Retirement Community in Berne. At Mennonite Mission Network, where she served from 1986 to 2008, her position receiving and processing donations to domestic and global mission efforts gave her opportunities for frequent outbursts of exuberance. At Mennonite Central Committee from 1964 to 1986, she was administrative assistant to executives at MCC's Akron, Pa., offices. At Mennonite Mission Network, Norr used the donations and correspondence that crossed her desk as vehicles for creating relation-

Joshua Steckley

C partner in Haiti chosen to produce film

Nicolas, coordinator of Support Local Production, a nnonite Central Committee partner organization in Haiti, aks to students about agricultural issues. The organization been selected by the Haitian government's Presidential mmission on Competition to produce a documentary and a nmercial that highlight Haitian agriculture.—*MCC*

ships and providing encouragement. She made it a point to encourage her colleagues and faithful constituents, giving thanks to God and recognizing grace in her life and in others.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

New pastors find clarity in their calling

ELKHART, Ind.—Fifteen pastors who are in the first five years of their first pastorates gathered March 27-29 at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, for Clarifying the Call. Denominational ministry leaders Karen Martens Zimmerly of Mennonite Church Canada and Linford King of Mennonite Church USA, along with AMBS faculty and administrators met with them.

"I learned that I wasn't alone in how I felt or what I thought," Isaac Villegas, pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship, said. "A pastor can live in isolation, but the sessions taught me that we all struggle with the same issues." —*AMBS*

Rochester, N.Y., church sponsors CPT forum

ROCHESTER, N.Y.—A book launch celebrating a newly-published history of Christian Peacemaker Teams provided the opportunity for the Rochester Area Mennonite Fellowship to join like-minded Christians in a forum and discussion on global Christian peacemaking. Kathleen Kern, a member of the Rochester church, is the author of *In Harm's Way: A History of Christian Peacemaker Teams* (Cascade Books, 2009). Speakers at the May 7 forum, cosponsored and hosted by the Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester, offered their assessments of the 20-year history of CPT.—*J. Roger Kurtz*

MDS, UCC volunteers rebuild homes together

NEW ORLEANS—Mennonite Disaster Service partnered with Church World Service in a faith-based blitz that is aimed at rebuilding 13 homes in the Littlewoods neighborhood in New Orleans. CWS has organized 10 organizations, including MDS, from April 20 to May 15, to repair damaged homes from Hurricane Katrina. MDS not only committed volunteers for this project but financial support as well. Six MDS and six United Church of Christ volunteers began work at a house that MDS supervised. During the second week of the ecumenical build, MDS volunteers also worked with volunteers from Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.—*MDS*

35 nations represented at peace institute

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Eighty-four visitors from 35 countries participated in the 14th annual Summer Peacebuilding Institute that opened May 4 at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg. Learners at SPI—a program operated by EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding—work in humanitarian, conflict resolution and other peace-related areas in their home countries. Ninety-six had been expected for the opening session, but attendance has been deterred by visa restrictions combined with the global economic downturn and swine flu outbreak, says SPI executive director Sue Williams. The SPI program, with six intensive classes in each of the four sessions, will run through June 12.—*EMU*

Voluntary Gas Tax movement raises money

GOSHEN, Ind.—The Voluntary Gas Tax, a new movement in Goshen, is self-imposed by a group of people who believe that gas isn't as expensive as it should be. A group of 26 people—many members of Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen—is headed by a pastor of AMC, Karl Shelly. Group members tax themselves 50 cents per gallon of gasoline they use, then pool their money to fund ecological energy conservation projects. In past years, the group has bought energy-efficient compact-fluorescent light bulbs for LaCasa, a community development organization that educates people in homeownership. The group also donated more than $800 worth of bus tokens to The Window, a soup kitchen/food pantry in downtown Goshen.—*Chase Snyder*

—*compiled by Anna Groff*

IN BRIEF

PNMC conference minister named

Iris de León-Hartshorn will become executive conference minister for Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference in September. Currently director of intercultural relations for Executive Leadership, de León-Hartshorn, Lancaster, Pa., will complete that role Aug. 14. She and her husband, Leo Hartshorn, and their grandson plan to move to the Portland area in August. —*Mennonite Church USA*

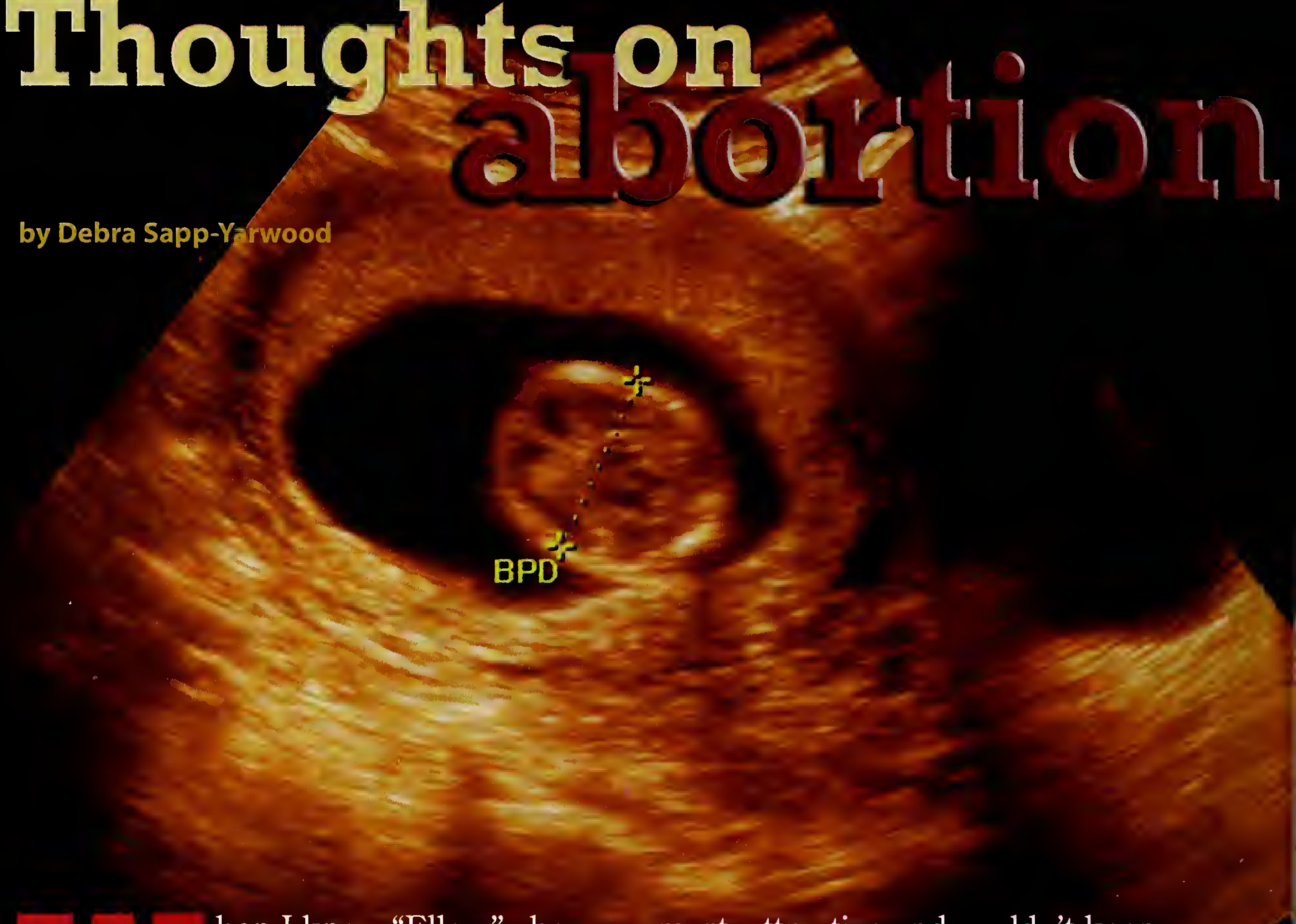
Mennonite collegiates win All-American honors

Athletes from Mennonite colleges competed in the NAIA track championships at Edwardsville, Ill., May 21-23. Goshen (Ind.) College's women's team finished 14th out of 158 teams, with three individual All-Americans: Tina Peters finished second and Tessa Horst third in the 3,000-meter race walk, and Abri Houser finished sixth in the 400-meter hurdles. Peni Acayo finished seventh in the triple jump. Garrett Hiebert of Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., also won All-American honors by finishing fourth in the javelin. —*NAIA*

The language of 'pro-choice' vs. 'pro-life' fails us.

Thoughts on abortion

by Debra Sapp-Yarwood



When I knew "Ellen," she was smart, attractive and couldn't keep a paying job. She found meaning by volunteering for nonprofits, including a classical music organization where I worked. She accepted concert tickets as pay for ushering on "good" days, when she wasn't hiding in her apartment arguing with her "visitors."

Ellen has schizophrenia. Her doctor continually adjusted her antipsychotic medications. She was on at least two, and they were working passably, when she met an intriguing man through a mental illness agency where she also volunteered. Ellen didn't know the extent of his mental health issues, other than he, too, had good and bad days and took powerful medications. It was a "good"—if careless—day for both of them when they became intimate and conceived; the prognosis for the zygote, however, was grim. In addition to an inherited predisposition to mental illness, the zygote's genetic code and chemistry was likely altered by the drugs, and any resulting child would by necessity be classified as "special needs" in the adoption pool.

At root in the abortion debate is whether life begins at conception and legal protections apply starting at that point.

Ellen had an abortion soon after her doctor told her she was pregnant.

I am untroubled by Ellen's abortion. I accept that there are other circumstances, within my imagining and outside it, that would justify abortion. For example, I also support abortions when the pregnancy results from violence—incest or another form of rape. For me, early abortions are not deaths.

I call myself a "nonconceptionist," and I use the word "conceptionist" to describe those who oppose all abortions, because at root in the abortion debate is whether life begins at conception and legal protections apply starting at that point. Although the word is inexact (nonconceptionists cannot tell you precisely when life begins in the womb), I prefer "nonconceptionist" to the more confident and divisive descriptor "pro-choice."

The language of "pro-choice" vs. "pro-life" fails us. It suggests that people on opposing sides are antichoice or antilife, which is ridiculous. It has caused rancor and shut down conversation. Yet conversation is crucial to democratic lawmaking, even as we acknowledge the unavoidable collision of emotion, faith and politics. Moreover, many women yearn to discuss abortion without feeling torn between being traitors to their sex or to babies unborn.

As a nonconceptionist, I believe God transcends human timeframes marked by acts of stupidity or violence. God controls when the spirit enters. The Scriptures that persuade many to oppose abortion—Jeremiah 1:5, Job 10:10 and 31:15; Psalms 51 and 139; Isaiah 49:1-5, Luke 1:39-44, Galatians 1:15—do not convince me that God's spirit may only convey at conception. A zygote conceived from an act of violence or stupidity may become God's child later in the womb—the divine spirit enters in peace. Or so I believe. On the other side of the issue, Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 and 7:1, which some use to support abortion, provide me cold comfort.

Fueling my beliefs is a personal struggle with infertility, including three miscarriages, "spontaneous abortions" in medical terminology. While one occurred mid-pregnancy and conveyed with it the grief of death, the other two, in the first trimester, conveyed a loss of hope. The differences in my response might have been hormonal; nevertheless, I couldn't believe God would create life in me only to destroy it cavalierly. One death I could accept; not three.

I recognize and respect that conceptionists feel this issue as viscerally as I do. Just as I both think and feel that it is ungodly cruel to impose mandatory pregnancy on a woman who has already endured a man raping her, conceptionists both think and feel that life starts when the sperm enters the egg, and to stop a zygote from developing is to commit murder.

A kind Catholic friend once asked me, "If life merely begins sometime before birth, is it the week before? The month before? Four months before? Three days before that? How can you assign a date other than conception?" I acknowledge that my position is difficult. Medical advances continually push back the date of viability, and we continually learn more about the process of gestation that makes me uncomfortable.

It is OK to be uncomfortable.
It is right that we are all uncomfortable.

It is OK to be uncomfortable. It is right that we are all uncomfortable.

My Catholic friend and another conceptionist friend with whom I have discussed this are uncomfortable, too: with the notion that if they and their cohorts succeed in outlawing abortion, then some women will have illegal, unsafe, sometimes fatal abortions anyway. My friends and I are not great and powerful decision makers, but when we acknowledge our discomfort, we can continue to talk. Would that our lawmakers start from that point.

It is inadequate to acknowledge that we all want to limit unintended pregnancies. We must also resolve what to allow when unintended pregnancies happen despite our efforts to limit them. I am content that our laws regarding abortion, now guided in the United States by the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision, may exceed what our personal and religious precepts allow us as individuals. This is common. I may legally own a gun, for example, and use it in various legal ways—some morally questionable. I choose not to own one at all.

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In addition to Ellen, I have another friend who had an abortion that was quick to follow conception and resulted from socially complex circumstances. That's two abortions in my frame of reference that I find justifiable. In total, however, I am aware of six abortions. That leaves four that I find discomfiting.

Because I am a conspicuous Democrat, a couple of women have assumed I am unconflicted about abortion, and they have shared with me a flip and casual regard for the procedure that saved them some inconvenience—for one of them it saved her twice. I am aghast.

> **We need language that opens the topic up, no matter how uncomfortable it makes us.**

The fourth discomfiting abortion, if it was one, happened in the 1970s. The woman, now middle aged, is only 98 percent sure she had an abortion because no one used the words "pregnant" or "abortion." When her periods stopped abruptly in high school, her mother took her to the gynecologist. After the examination, her mother and the doctor consulted privately. The girl knew she could be pregnant, but they told her only that she had a "problem" and the doctor would help her get her periods restarted right away. Since her mother is now dead and the doctor long retired, this woman will never know what happened. I don't know whether current laws permit this situation, but it illustrates what may happen when discussion about abortion is censored by embarrassment, rancor or distrust. We need language that opens the topic up, no matter how uncomfortable it makes us.

I add to my conceptionist friends' discomfort when I tell them that in addition to supporting early abortions, I would be reluctant to limit medical decisions when end-of-life issues present themselves, even when they affect a life in utero, and even in the third trimester.

When my elderly father added renal failure to his ailments—advanced Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, prostate cancer—my mother declined a shunt for dialysis, knowing she would end my father's misery, if shorten his life. She never regretted the decision.

When a child in utero is medically destined for a painful and short life, the parents need all options available—including the option to withdraw life support before birth. (It may be argued that when full fetal removal was outlawed, under the rubric "partial birth abortion," one of the more humane options for this situation was taken off the table.)

My conceptionist friends ask how often such medical conditions occur. None of us knows because such decisions are, rightly, private. But the question makes us all uncomfortable.

While I support keeping abortion safe, private and legal, my discomfort with the frequency and sometimes casual regard for the procedure makes me also protective of my conceptionist friends' freedom of expression. Short of committing physical harm, obstructing others' freedom or sense of safety, I think it is good, even important, that they speak and encourage us to think and pray about the topic. We all should prepare a personal strategy with regard to unintended pregnancies, which may not take full advantage of the laws governing abortion.

Last autumn, a group of conceptionists organized a protest along roughly three miles of a busy thoroughfare in my community. Their protest lacked controversy, as they stayed on the public sidewalk and their signs had only words, no graphic pictures. Their goal, I think, was to show the power of their numbers. It worked.

As I drove by with my son, he asked about all the people. I told him they were protesting abortion. I shared my views that were age appropriate for an 11-year-old, then I told him that these people are conceptionists, and that means mostly, with regard to making babies, they support good choices.

Debra Sapp-Yarwood is a member of Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City, Kan.

The messiness of 21st-century mission

Being neighbor to trouble and moral agonies

by Jonathan Larson

In November 2008, I was visiting over a chicken sandwich with an old friend, who is nothing if not, in our current parlance, missional. He has this rare and beautiful quality of being incorrigibly missional among his neighbors. As we prepared to take leave of each other over crumpled fast-food wrappers, he raised his hand as though to say, Oh, there's one other thing I wanted to mention. He went on to tell a story that has left him burdened, sleepless and perplexed.

Several years ago, it seems, he and his church agreed to host a family in flight from the calamity of Katrina and its shameful aftermath. For a time this family lived in the church hall while arrangements were made to permit them to be viable in the city—arrangements that took months. With the stresses of a new setting, difficulty in finding employment and demons from their past, the family was overcome with a tide of trouble that landed the husband in state prison and ended the marriage, all of it collateral damage that will never be registered in any inventory and for which FEMA can offer no solace.

My missional friend has continued to be a neighbor to this tattered family in its disarray. But his concern turned to turmoil and even alarm when he had a call from the wife, who struggles to look after her family on her own. She told my friend that she had discovered to her dismay that she was pregnant. Already unable to care adequately for her three children, she let him know that she urgently needed to undergo an abortion. "I don't believe in it," she confessed, "but neither can I stand the thought of giving up a child who I would never mother." Would he please be with her when she went for the procedure, which had already been scheduled for the following Tuesday? She could think of no one else who would keep her company in this painful and troubling circumstance.

My friend demurred, pleading for sober reflection and prayer, adding that he would search for an agency that might permit adoption of the child. After research both on the Web and by phone, he could find, to his surprise, no appropriate agency that would step in to provide an alternative to the planned abortion. Now he turned to face me to ask the inevitable question. "What am I to do? As a follower of Jesus, I cannot condone what she is contemplating. Yet I have failed to find any viable alternatives. Nor can I accept that at this moment of extremity, I should fail to be a neighbor to one who has been cut adrift in the world."

In the end, it seems, being missional means living in the middle of such moral messiness. There is no holiday from such dilemmas for those who seek the kingdom. In fact, such agonies seem inherent to mission. So what does our missional church say? What would you tell my missional friend?

Jonathan Larson lives in Gaborone, Botswana.

Being missional means living in the middle of such moral messiness. There is no holiday from such dilemmas for those who seek the kingdom.

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It has taken a village to help this family. I don't know any of the villagers' political leanings, but I do know they are all pro-life.

Photo provided

Born to a poor, refugee mother: Jennifer Drago holds Saw Cree Hey, wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Mr. Christ

It's five o'clock in the morning, dark, mostly quiet except for the drip-drip of the kitchen sink. A 2-day-old baby rests quietly on my lap sucking my finger; his mother and sisters are sleeping in the bedroom. Mom arrived in this country just 10 months earlier with her three young daughters as part of the U.S. refugee program. Her husband died before they came, killed in Bangkok as he searched for work. He was an abusive man who ran with other women and drank too much homemade brew. Yet Mom, who had lived for years in a tiny bamboo hut in the jungles of Thailand, was determined to secure a better future for her family.

But shortly after arrival here, some sweet-talking man came along. Did he seduce her with false promises of a good life together? Was she longing for some man to notice her and make her feel special? Who really understands all the emotional complexities that converge when male and female get together? The only certainty we have is that a child was conceived.

Oh, the shame, the humiliation she felt! It was so deep she could not bring herself to tell her caseworker until she was almost six months pregnant and could no longer hide the emerging life. She was too ashamed to tell the church that was supporting her family.

"So many people were helping us, and I feel so bad about what I did," she said. "I sometimes don't want people to see my face."

Comes

by Jennifer Drago

A village of people help a mother raise her children in a new land.

It's now 5:30 a.m.. The 3- and 5-year-old sisters emerge shyly from the bedroom, disappear into the bathroom and come out rubbing their eyes. They briefly look at their baby brother, then play with the action figures strewn on the kitchen table. Umbrellas hanging on a hook beckon them, and soon they are jumping about the tiny kitchen, opening and closing them, squealing with delight.

The refugee agency working with Mom gave more assistance. The caseworkers took her to an obstetrician; the church paid another month's rent. When all the resources were exhausted, a Christian ministry that helps refugees prepare for American life took in the family. The children now go to childcare and school. Mom goes to school for the first time in her life, learning English. She tightly clasps a pencil and carefully prints her name, proud as any first grader.

Someone takes her for medical appointments. Someone takes her grocery shopping. Someone watches her kids so Mom can take a break. Someone gives her clothes and money and helps clean her place. But Mom is a giver as well. She works in the garden, cooks a meal for another family, helps sew a community quilt and comforts a neighbors' wailing child.

The girls open the refrigerator. Without a common language between us, I surmise they want something to drink. I put water on the stove, find coffee mugs and packets of hot chocolate.

I don't know what the next move will be for this family or how Mom will support them. They will apply for government assistance; she qualifies for $330 a month. That isn't much when a two-bedroom apartment rent is $750. A common job for newly arrived refugees is cleaning hotel rooms or working in a chicken plant. The work is strenuous and tedious, the commute is three hours and the pay is about $8 an hour, without benefits. Moreover, with an economy in recession, even bad jobs are hard to find. Some government agency will locate the father of the baby for financial support, but that's unlikely to be sufficient.

It's now 7 a.m., dawn glistens. The 9-year-old walks into the kitchen and picks up a pot. She scrapes out last night's leftover rice into the sink. She pours new rice into the pot, adds water, swishes it around with her hand, then returns the pot to the rice cooker. Breakfast is on the way.

It has taken a village to help this family. I don't know any of the villagers' political leanings, but I do know they are all pro-life. I know this, not by how they voted in last November's elections but by the love, kindness and generosity they have shown this family.

For women with unwanted pregnancies to choose life, they need exactly what this woman is getting: forgiveness and acceptance; practical help with daily life; honest talk on responsibility, relationships and birth control; financial help; a way to contribute and improve her situation and a community of caring people to belong to. These are huge tasks that take much time, money, patience and love.

It is cheaper, easier and more convenient to have an abortion. If we want women to choose life, how are we helping them do that?

The baby is whimpering, so I bring him to Mom for his morning milk. "Because he was born in December, we decided to call him Saw Cree Hey. It means "Mister Christ Comes," his mother explained. Yes, Mr. Christ Comes was born to a refugee in a strange land, to a poor, unmarried woman who was not overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit. But she has been overwhelmed by the power of love and support. Thanks be to God for this healthy baby, this courageous mother and the countless number of people who have made this beginning not only special but possible.

Jennifer Drago is the author of A Thousand and One Egyptian Nights *(Herald Press, 2007) and lives and works at Jubilee Partners, a Christian Community in Comer, Ga., that provides hospitality to refugees.*

Where is Jesus?

by Isaac S. Villegas

Hebrews is a book for dreamers. As we all know, there are good and bad dreams. And when I say bad dreams, I don't mean nightmares; I mean delusions. There are dreams that make us forget our everyday lives as we soar the heights in our imaginations with closed eyes, oblivious to our world—retreating into our solitude, where we don't have to worry about anyone or anything else, just me and the Jesus in my head. These delusional dreams blind us from everyday discipleship.

The Epistle to the Hebrews offers a different way of dreaming about Jesus. A singular dream is at the heart of Hebrews, a singular vision of Jesus. But for Hebrews, when we center our lives on Christ we are de-centered and destabilized. The gospel teaches us to receive our world as a site of discovery, the place where Jesus beckons us into strange new worlds beyond our dreams.

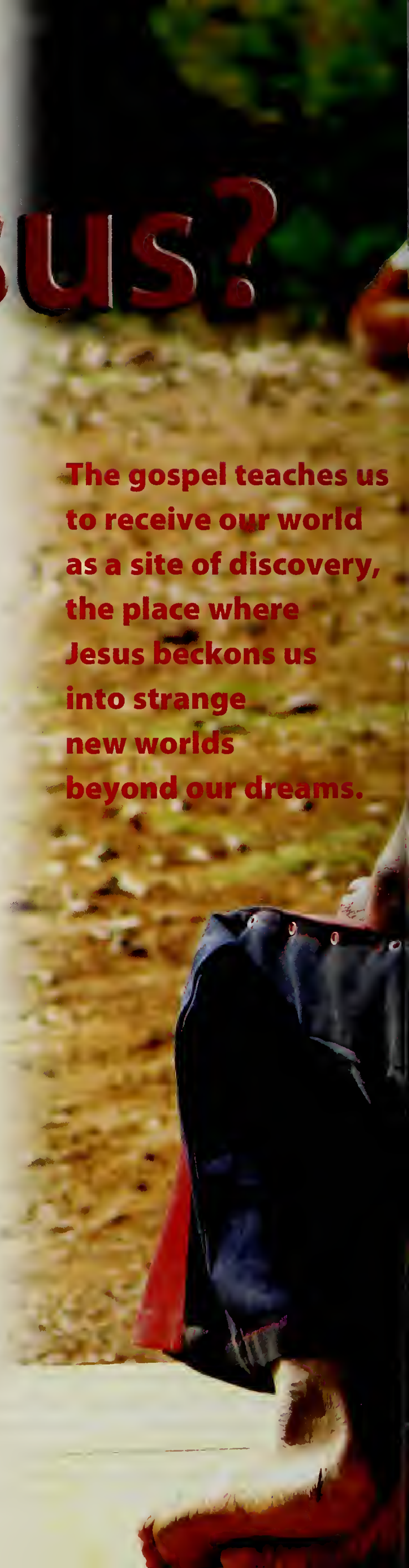
What is this dream? It's the hopeful vision of Psalm 8:4-6. The author of Hebrews quotes this glorious dream in 2:7-8: "You made him [i.e., the son of man] for a little while lower than the angels, you crowned him with glory and honor, you placed all things in subjection under his feet." The Son of Man, Jesus Christ, "the heir of all things … the radiance of God's glory" (1:3), is king—Christ the king, enthroned above all worldly powers, with "all things under his feet." Nothing is above Christ's lordship; there is "nothing that is not subject to him."

Suddenly Hebrews turns us from these heavenly heights to the harsh reality of this world, the world of our experience, a world plagued by violence and suffering, evil and pain. All is not well: "At present we do not yet see all things subjected to him; but we do see Jesus, who was for a little while made lower than the angels, is crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death" (2:8-9).

With these words the vision falls apart. We wake up from the dream of Psalm 8 to where Jesus reigns victoriously over all. "At present we do not yet see all things subjected to him." Reality is too harsh. When we open our eyes, we see peoples ruled by the chaotic forces of evil. When we wake up from the dream, we see a world that is far from the one described in Psalm 8. Alex Sider, a Mennonite theologian at Bluffton (Ohio) University, offers this reading of the triumphal dream of Psalm 8: "It was a broken vision, and it would not be easily repaired" (*To See History Doxologically*; forthcoming).

But in the brokenness we catch a glimpse of something else: "But we do see Jesus" (2:9). Where exactly is the author of Hebrews looking when he makes this claim? How do we see Jesus? Many people ask the church this same question. "Where is this Jesus you say so much about?"

The end of Hebrews opens our eyes to how we may wrestle with these questions. In chapter 13, we find that the tortured and crucified Jesus waits for us on the margins. "Let us go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured" (13:13). Jesus is there right now, presently suffering, disgraced, marginalized and abused. And what are we supposed to do? We must go to him and bear the burdens of his abuse and disgrace. Hebrews calls us to solidarity with



The gospel teaches us to receive our world as a site of discovery, the place where Jesus beckons us into strange new worlds beyond our dreams.

Dreamstime.com

The Epistle to the Hebrews offers a different way of dreaming about Jesus.

the Jesus who suffers among the reproachable and unclean. To see Jesus involves wandering into odious environments. Sider captures this exhortation with an epitaph from Gillian Rose's book *Love's Work*: "Keep your mind in hell and despair not."

For many, hell is a place on earth. I remember a conversation with a friend who grew up in hell. We were studying the parables in Luke 13. After reading Jesus' description of a place where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth," my friend looked up at me and said, "I've been there." He went on to describe growing up in a house of prostitution in the middle of an urban slum. He remembers waking up next to the recently dead, victims of drug overdose. "That's hell," he said.

No one should grow up in living hell. But people do. Will we help them endure—"bear" as Hebrews says—their abuse? Walking with people like my friend is hard going. Returning to hellish places isn't comfortable for me or him. I would rather take a detour, change the subject, go elsewhere.

There are streams of contemporary spirituality that turn Jesus into a possession, something we can own.

When Hebrews tells us to fix our eyes and center our lives on Jesus, we are radically de-centered, destabilized and end up where we don't want to go. As the title of Ernst Käsemann's landmark book on Hebrews puts it, we become *The Wandering People of God*. If we want to fix our eyes on Jesus, we must wander in the wastelands, lose ourselves in a wilderness of slums and linger in abandoned places. The nomadic people of God set up their tents where no one else wants to live. We wander into relationships of solidarity where we bear one another's burdens and hope to encounter the living presence of Jesus among the disfigured, disordered and disheveled. Can we see Jesus? Depends on where we go and with whom we linger.

When we go, when we wander, we must learn that we have just as much to receive as to give. We are nomads with open hands, ready to receive someone else's leading hand, because with that hand comes Christ's body. The spirituality of Hebrews adds a critical edge to our talk about evangelism and mission. There are streams of contemporary spirituality that turn Jesus into a possession, something we can own. We can put him in our pocket or tuck him away in

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our hearts for safekeeping. We treat Jesus as a deposit in our spiritual bank accounts, a fund to draw upon later when we need it and lend to others if we feel generous.

Sometimes our descriptions of evangelism and the missional church fall into the same temptation. We talk as if we own Jesus. Since we have God's presence—the reasoning goes—we must transform our communities into missional churches that share what we already possess. Thus giving only goes in one direction: Jesus is ours to give away. We own the patent on God's presence; the church owns the exclusive rights of Jesus.

But Phil Kniss, pastor of Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va., helps us see a different kind of missional encounter, one that resonates with Hebrews. In a sermon on Feb. 4, 2007, Kniss said that a missional church wanders into the world and "asks what God is up to around here." Through wandering, this kind of church "lets go of itself," surrenders agendas and strategies and instead cultivates virtues of receptivity. This is a church that "listens and looks," because "the reign of God is trying to be born somewhere." Therefore, Kniss said, "we go [into the world] as willing to receive as to give."

The missional church is one that learns how to receive the agents of God's call: the strangers and prisoners and the mistreated.

Too often we consider ourselves the agent of God's call; we are the people who already heard God's call and now must offer that call to the world. But Kniss describes a missional church that is "as willing to receive as to give." Hospitality is the name of this missional posture. We wander beyond the walls of our community because Jesus is there, calling out to us, awaiting our reception. That's why the author of Hebrews closes his sermon by telling the church to welcome the stranger: "Do not neglect caring for strangers/foreigners, for through this some have cared for messengers/angels without knowing" (13:2, my translation).

At this point the author of Hebrews reminds us of the story of Abraham and Sarah showing hospitality to the three messengers of God, who turn out to be the Lord: "The Lord appeared to Abraham ... when he was sitting at the entrance to his tent. ... Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground" (Genesis 18:1-2).

In Genesis 18, foreign migrants turn out to be the Lord. Foreigners may be God in our midst, divine messengers who bring the Word from God. Therefore, Hebrews tells us, we should practice hospitality if we want to receive the gift of God's presence. The messenger of God, Jesus, the Lord, comes to us through strangers and foreigners—dare I say the immigrant? They are God's mission to save us from ourselves. Will we serve them as Abraham and Sarah shared a meal with the Lord?

For Hebrews, the missional church is one that learns how to receive the agents of God's call: the strangers and prisoners and the mistreated. Our task is to open ourselves to receive what only they can give: their very presence, which may turn out to be our Lord. As Sider puts it, "for the author of Hebrews, [the gospel] is continually given as an ecstatic mission that takes the shape of mutual love and hospitality." We wander into the good news of Christ's presence when our mission of love takes us into unfamiliar places where we can share a stranger's burdens.

The message of Hebrews can echo back to us from unexpected places, like a rock star. In February 2006, the lead singer from U2 preached a sermon to president George Bush and his friends. Bono gives Hebrews an unforgettable context: "God is in the slums, in the cardboard boxes where the poor play house. God is in the silence of a mother who has infected her child with a virus that will end both their lives. God is in the cries heard under the rubble of war. God is in the debris of wasted opportunity and lives, and God is with us if we are with them."

God is with us if we are with them. According to Hebrews (and Bono), suffering strangers and wandering foreigners are the messengers through whom we see Jesus. They are just as much the agents of God's call as we are. They have much to give, if we are willing to receive the gifts of their presence. Will we receive them as God's mission to save us from ourselves? If our American churches want a future, we need to wander into the places everyone else abandons. That's where we belong, on the margins. Our people are the ones who look like Jesus, suffering in cardboard boxes, under the rubble of war, among the debris. Our people are the ones everyone else has cast out, the unclean, the abandoned, the strange.

Every Wednesday at noon, friends and strangers set up a table and chairs on the side of highway 15/501 between Durham and Chapel Hill, N.C. (see "Roadside Jesus," Feb. 17, page 8). A few people drive up in cars; the rest wander out from the forests where they live in tents. Carolyn gathers everyone around the table—they call it "The Open Table." They hold hands. Heads are bowed. In unison they pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hollowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread." As cars speed by, they commune around the table and enjoy this bread from God. They share news about the week: a broken rib, a robbery, chiggers, harassment from Chapel Hill police, someone in the hospital, no more food stamps, hitching a ride to Montana.

"Let us then escape to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. For we don't have a lasting city around here, but we search for the coming one" (13:13-14, my translation). Hebrews tells me that my home is elsewhere. I join the strangers on Wednesday during my lunch hour because I'm homeless, too, or at least I need to learn what it means to be homeless. They are my teachers; I am a disciple with much to learn. Hebrews tells me to expect to find Jesus out there on the side of the road. I can't say that I recognize him. That's why I'll go again.

I wonder: If I pray "thy kingdom come" with them every week, at some point will I discover that the coming kingdom is already at hand? I believe the kingdom happens at the table, when we break bread and bear each other's burdens. And if that's the case, then this kingdom is not something I possess. It's not a kingdom I can build if I work hard enough on the mission. Rather it's an episodic kingdom that happens whether I'm there or not. I can receive it only if I return to their portable table next week and take my seat and patiently await another advent of God's presence.

"But we do see Jesus." Maybe he will come to me as in a dream, when I sit and pray and eat on the margins of highway 15/501.

Isaac Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship.

Dreamstime.com

For Franklin

by Jennifer Halteman Schrock

This is mercy:
to have a friend
who remembers you not
for the ways you have failed
but for the beauty in your hands.
A friend who sees your able fingers
sand, measure and saw as he stands
before the court on your behalf.
"It was the finest towel rack
Sarasota High School had ever seen,"
he tells the judge.
As if towel racks matter.
As if a single act of goodness
could wipe out all your sins,
forty years later.
This is mercy.
Do it again, Dink.
Wherever you are,
in prison or out,
find wood and build.

Jennifer Halteman Schrock attends Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Ind.

Pre-emption redemption

Christopher Clymer Kurtz attends Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

The debate about abortion involves not just a medical procedure but also personal morality, corporate ethics, legal and human rights, privacy, money, medical autonomy and much more. In this complexity "pro-life" and "pro-choice" labels serve only to fever polarization that instead must be pre-empted.

My guess is that the Religious Right and the far left actually agree on at least one thing: fewer abortions would be a good thing. As a pro-choice advocate and former abortion clinic counselor told me several years ago, "Women don't have abortions because they're fun."

The question becomes a matter of how those of us who are on the right or left can work together toward doing away with things that are not fun. It's analogous to ending terrorism: nobody wants anyone else to feel so desperate that they detonate themselves at the marketplace; nobody wants anyone else to be backed into an abortive corner. What might help people all across the abortion-issue spectrum is a rallying cry not of legislating morality or unlimited choice but of pre-emption.

The language of pre-emption was used incorrectly by President Bush in his "war on terror" as justification for invading Afghanistan and Iraq, actions widely believed to have worsened, not lessened, our nation's vulnerability to terrorist attacks.

Many—even Bush's senior staff—questioned the efficacy of this misguided "pre-emption." In 2007, concerned about our nation's lack of "commitment to fairness, justice and the rule of law" in the war on terror, David Cole and Jules Lobel wrote in *The Nation* (www.thenation.com/doc/20070924/cole_lobel): "Then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld identified the critical question in an October 2003 internal Pentagon memo: 'Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?' While there is no precise metric for answering Rumsfeld's question, there can be little doubt that our preventive tactics have been a boon to terrorist recruitment throughout the world."

After the antiterror missile strikes in Pakistan earlier this year, *The Guardian* (www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/25/obama-airstrikes-pakistan) noted that "Obama, in his first military action as president, sanctioned two missile attacks inside Pakistan, ... killing 22 people, reportedly women and children among them. The attacks drew criticism from Pakistani officials. ... Pakistani president Asif Zardari told the U.S. ambassador to Islamabad ... that the strikes 'do not help the war on terror.'"

Both the just outlawing of terrorism and our government's practice of both anticipatory and retaliatory military actions, with their inevitable civilian casualties, are ultimately futile. Court and military action will never prevent the fermentation of harmful intentions that culminate in a person's strapping on explosives. Instead, it will be the truly pre-emptive cultivation of concrete opportunities and founded hopes that will usurp the desperation that lures people into such destruction.

Similarly, efforts both to make abortions more readily available and to limit abortion practices have one thing in common: Neither effort deals with the underlying social ills that supply the abortion industry with clients. Just as fighting terrorism with military action has probably spawned more terrorists, fighting to legalize or outlaw (legally pre-empt) abortion has only caused divisions that have taken focus away from addressing the real problems at hand.

During last fall's campaign season, Frank Schaeffer wrote (www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-schaeffer/frank-as-a-former-pro-lif_b_119435.html), "We can't [reduce abortions] by concentrating on politics or silver bullets such as trying for that one magic court appointment. It's the 'holistic' approach that is really what's important if our goal is to reduce the number of abortions rather than just 'win' political games. ... What kind of care do we provide to mothers and children? What is our educational system like? Is health care available to all? Do our preschool programs and everything from paternal and maternal leave to the economic well-being of our country come first? Or do we argue about abortion rights while we live lives of such supreme selfish decadence that the nature of our country means that no matter what we do with the laws about abortion, life will not be valued?"

Maybe someday abortion rights activists and pro-life advocates will find themselves working side-by-side not because they have been dissuaded from their deep-seated convictions but because they know that improving everyone's well-being pre-empts the need for much that is unwanted.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **For I was a stranger**—Donald Clymer

MCC may become a new 'global entity'

Mennonite Central Committee is planning major organizational changes.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is considering major organizational changes in order to work more closely with Anabaptist churches around the world in peace-building, development and relief.

MCC is nearing the end of an 18-month process called "New Wine/New Wineskins" that has involved several thousand people worldwide in discerning God's call for MCC in the 21st century. The process has created recommendations for a new vision, organizational structure and global service forum.

About 100 participants will gather June 3-5 for a final summit in Hillsboro, Kan., to debate, revise and approve recommendations for MCC's vision and structure.

The summit results will then be submitted for ratification by 12 MCC boards representing regional, national and binational offices in Canada and the United states.

The proposed statement of common purpose defines MCC as "a ministry of Anabaptist churches worldwide participating in God's work of reconciliation."

Justice and peace-building, sustainable development and disaster response and prevention are proposed as mission priorities. Anabaptist churches include Mennonites, Brethren in Christ and other related denominations.

The proposed structure moves MCC from being a Canadian and U.S. organization to a global entity, according to Arli Klassen, MCC executive director.

A new, central MCC office would administer and be a resource to the entire system of MCC organizations.

Programmatic work around the world, including in Canada and the United States, would be the responsibility of MCC Canada, MCC U.S. and new MCC organizations accountable to Anabaptist churches in other countries.

The recommendations also call for Mennonite World Conference to lead a process that may result in a forum of global Anabaptist service agencies, of which MCC would be a member.

The recommendations do not include where the central MCC office might be located, but it is likely that it would not be in Akron, Pa., where MCC U.S. is based and where MCC's international operations have largely been headquartered, Klassen says.

Klassen emphasizes that MCC is committed to continuing its work in the name of Christ and to maintaining the trust of its donors, partner organizations and constituent churches.

"Underlying all of this, in order to make this successful, is trust," Klassen says. "We need to trust that God is present in the middle of this process to strengthen MCC as a ministry of the global church."

The New Wine/New Wineskins recommendations are available online at mcc.org/newwineskins.—*Tim Shenk for Mennonite Central Committee*

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MCC photo

Participants at a New Wine/New Wineskins summit in Accra, Ghana (from left): Phil Rich, Mama Cisca Mawangu and Athanasius Dapul.

Executive Board discusses MCC process

At its April 16-18 meeting in Rochester, N.Y., the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board received a written report from Arli Klassen, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee, about its 18-month process called "New Wine/New Wineskins."

EB members had appointed a task force to look at MCC's relationship with Mennonite Church USA. Jim Schrag, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, said, "MCC is a ministry of its member churches." In its discussion of the task force's report, EB members noted that MCC "uses ministries of the church." This document, they said, mentions the church, which is good and seems more holistic.

The task force said the report raises four questions: (1) Who are the international voices? (2) How can we recommend what to do with international programs? (3) What is the central mission of MCC? (4) How will it be organized in Canada and the United States?

The task forces noted as well that MCC is moving toward a closer relationship with Mennonite World Conference but is moving slowly.—*Gordon Houser*

Indonesian, Zimbabweans swap stories

Nine young adults serve with Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network.

MCC/MWC photo

Six of the nine current YAMEN! participants are pictured in Akron, Pa. In front, from left, are Fairchild Dube, Passionate Ncube and Erika Suhartono. In back, from left, are Ntuthuko Ndlovu, Yunarso Rosandono and Sithabile Ndlovu.

"God created people that are different and blessed them in different places in the world … but we need to work together to make our world a better place," says Passionate Ncube, a Zimbabwean spending a year in Indonesia. It is his first time living outside his own country.

Passionate is one of nine international young adults who are volunteering in another country for one year through YAMEN! (Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network), a joint program of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

The program is designed for single young adults aged 18 to 30, primarily but not exclusively in the global South. Participants are committed Christians, active in and supported by their church and ready to serve and build church-to-church relationships within the Anabaptist family.

This year, two YAMEN! participants from Zimbabwe are serving in Indonesia, and one YAMEN! participant from Indonesia is serving in Zimbabwe. The three have met to explain cultural differences and provide support for each other in hard times.

Yunarso Rosandono, from Indonesia, noted that when he arrived in Zimbabwe "things were difficult … there were no food commodities in the shops and there were queues everywhere." A teachers' strike kept a school closed where he had been assigned to teach.

"As a citizen, I can say that Zimbabwe is passing through a phase, but the problem is that we have stayed long in that phase," says Ntuthuko Ndlovu, from Zimbabwe, who is serving with YAMEN! in Indonesia.

Yunarso is teaching at Magwegwe Primary School and at the Brethren in Christ Lobengula Preschool, and he also works as a pastoral assistant. Ntuthuko says his training and experience with English as a second language helps him in teaching English in a Mennonite theological college in Indonesia.

Passionate helps with the daily activities of the Mennonite church in Srumpung Gunung in Central Java and works with youth in the community. He had done volunteer teaching in Zimbabwe when the country's economic and political crisis left schools without teachers.

In Indonesia, he teaches English in an orphanage and in junior and preschools with mostly Muslim students.

"Not all Muslim people are radical," says Passionate. "That has been a major view for me that changed. … The Muslims I have met in Indonesia are very good people." He has also discovered that American people "are completely different than [the stereotypes] in the movies."

He and Ntuthuko relate to Americans and Canadians who are in Indonesia under Serving and Learning Together, an MCC program for young adults from Canada and the United States.

Ntuthuko was surprised to find people in Indonesia who have never seen a black person. "Some people ask to feel my hair," he says. An Indonesian villager who had never before met an African said, "He is like my own son."

Yunarso says he is learning about African theology, Zimbabwean culture and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. A mother and baby who were HIV positive attended a course he taught and inspired him. Because he has gained new insights on the pandemic he would like to stay beyond his current term in Zimbabwe so he can help educate people about HIV/AIDS, perhaps in a different program since YAMEN! service is limited to one year.

Six other young adults will also complete a one-year term of service with YAMEN! in July. Erika Suhartono, from Indonesia, is serving in Mennonite church music programs in Recife, Brazil. Fairchild Dube, from Zimbabwe, is serving in a youth program in Tanzania, and Sithabile Ndlovu, also from Zimbabwe, is serving with Centro Menno Programs in Bolivia. Maritza Masavi Hurtado, from Bolivia, is serving at a Christian school for the deaf in Nicaragua. Ana Julia Lopez, from Nicaragua, is serving in Mennonite church youth programs in Mexico. Osée Tshiwape from the Democratic Republic of Congo is serving at the Korea Anabaptist Centre in South Korea.—*Ferne Burkhardt of Mennonite World Conference*

Mexico tour focuses on women, migration

This letter from intergenerational group calls for changes in economic practices.

As people continue to struggle with a dismal economic outlook, we ask how our church can encourage society and governments to take meaningful strides toward just monetary relationships and trade policies that respect brothers and sisters at home and in other countries.

How can the church challenge our governments' economic policies to serve not only our interests and needs but also be part of God's redemptive project of resurrection and reconciliation? How can we as Christians change our personal economic practices to be less conforming to savage capitalism and more conforming to the pursuit of just peace?

We are an intergenerational group of Mennonite Central Committee workers, a pastor, a social worker and a researcher, all of whom participated in a learning tour to Mexico in October 2008. The tour focused on women and migration issues and was hosted by MCC and partner organizations in Mexico. We spent four days on the northern border of Mexico and five days in the southern state of Chiapas to learn about the dynamics of these border regions.

When we asked migrant women why they risk so much and make the decision to leave their children, their homes and their families to migrate, the answer was devastatingly similar for all: "We have no other choice."

U.S. and Canadian economic policies toward all of Latin America and the Caribbean have been harmful to the region's poorest over the last 20 years. The effects of these policies are being seen on the children of today. Children are growing up without parents because both have migrated to the United States to work. They are caught in a web of growing violence and social breakdown. Migration from Central America and Mexico to the United States and Canada skyrocketed from 1994 to 2000, increasing by 300 percent. In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement was signed, bringing overproduced, oversubsidized North American agricultural products into Mexico. Small-scale, local agricultural production has been devastated.

The rules—perhaps myths—of free-market economics do not take into account human need or social welfare. They seek to provide the most efficient framework in which those who are able to compete are able to win as much as possible. After witnessing the resulting humanitarian crisis in the two border regions, we need to ask: Is this economic system consistent with Jesus' steadfast denunciation of violence, division and destruction? Is this the economic system of a reconciling God?

Linda Gehman Peachey

The Mennonite Central Committee learning tour group on the border of Mexico with Guatemala

The migrant women we met told their stories and entrusted us with their testimonies and with their dignity.

For these reasons, we who saw injustice and heard the cry of a people are saying to the church: Now is the time to rethink how we do economics, keeping in mind the widow, the foreigner, the orphan, the oppressed, the marginalized, as Jesus taught us to do. In solidarity with them and women around the world, we invite Anabaptist churches in Canada and the United States to consider three commitments:

1. to challenge ourselves and others to strive toward personal consumption and purchasing habits that reflect a Christian ethic of integrity and compassion;

2. to work toward creating sustainable and reconciling communities so that our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren inherit a world that is better than this and not a world on the brink of destruction because of insatiable needs for nonrenewable and "cheap" resources;

3. to call on our church leaders and governments to promote economic practices that create instead of destroy, uphold justice and not oppression, and promote equality and not exploitation.

Signed: Eiieen Viau, Spring Mount (Pa.) Mennonite Church; Linda Gehman Peachey, East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.; Emma Frederick, Franconia Conference, Pa.; Lynette Mast, Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.; Luann Good Gingrich, Mannheim (Ont.) Mennonite Church; Rebecca Bartel, Veraguas Brethren in Christ Church, Bogotá, Colombia; and Marion Meyer, Mexico City.

Note: This is a letter from seven members of an October 2008 group tour to Mexico hosted by Mennonite Central Committee.

Mission leaders gather, explore Denver

Thirty-three attendees hear from pastors, participate in an 'urban plunge.'

Brian Yoder Schlabach

Minister of Peace and Justice for Mennonite Mission Network Leo Hartshorn participates in the urban plunge by drumming as a street musician in downtown Denver.

The medieval church saved the arts, but today the arts will save the church. —Dayvid Graybill

Mennonite missional leaders from across the country gathered May 2-4 to discuss what it means to be a missional church in our current culture. The event, held in Denver, Colo., and hosted by Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership, drew 33 attendees.

Jeff Wright, president of Shalom Ministries in Pasadena, Calif., spoke about how to read social contexts from a missional perspective. Quoting the first line of the *Mennonite Hymnal: A Worship Book* song, "What Is This place?" he said that a missional church must understand the context of "the place" to be effective. Wright spoke about the need for the rehabilitation of evangelism in the North American church as it moves toward mission in a post-Christendom environment.

Two local Mennonite leaders shared their stories of new church ventures in the context of the city. Phil Ebersole, pastor of The Bridge, a new Denver church that has been ministering to mostly young adults since September 2008, spoke about reaching out to them from an urban perspective.

Ebersole described how he is able to engage young people who are looking for something other than a traditional church setting by using a mix of "orthodox historical Christian beliefs and a strong commitment to action." Members meet weekly in Ebersole's home for a light meal, discussion, community time and prayer.

Dayvid Graybill, founder of Another Way, presented new ideas on how to experience God through creative and nontraditional means.

Another Way is a gathering of people who use the arts as a guide on their spiritual journey and has been active in Denver since 2008.

"The medieval church saved the arts," Graybill said, "but today the arts will save the church."

On May 2, three Denver pastors talked about how they have found ways to serve in their urban setting: Steve Johnsen, pastor of the Denver Inner City Parish, Phil Abeyta, pastor of His Love Fellowship, and Age Sandoval, pastor of Tha Myx International.

Sandoval, a former felon turned Christian hip-hop recording artist, described his ministry to inner-city residents by using a message that they can relate to. Tha Mix International, which Sandoval calls a "hip-hop church," has ministries that include gang intervention and prevention, a Christian car club, basketball ministries, food drives, mentorships, and many more urban-focused outreaches.

Johnsen, who has been at the Inner City Parish for over 40 years, described what it means to be a multigenerational, spiritual and educational presence on Denver's west side. The Inner City Parish's task is "to be a liturgical and progressive church within the mainstream community," Johnsen said.

Down the street at His Love Fellowship, Abeyta is working with the same type of low-income, mostly Latino "West-siders" as Johnsen is. His Love Fellowship began in 1994 as a response to what has been called Denver's "summer of violence," and has been ministering to community members since.

After worshiping in area churches on Sunday morning, participants broke into groups to spend the afternoon experiencing the city through an "urban plunge." Groups saw neighborhoods such as Five Points (known as the "Harlem of the West"), East Colfax (once called the "wickedest street in America") and downtown Denver.

They experienced "soft demographics," Wright said. "Not what you'd find on the census bureau's Web site."

The goal was not to become experts on the city or to evangelize but to discover ways to experience a new area.—*Brian Yoder Schlabach for Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Network*

New structure brings new voices to EMM

Council to connect Eastern Mennonite Missions staff, board and constituency

The "representative council," a new group of mission counselors and advocates for Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), gathered April 18 at Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

"In every generation the Lord calls and anoints servants with new vision for the next steps in mission," said EMM President Richard Showalter in his opening remarks. "This afternoon we stand on one of those thresholds. A baton is being passed. An old structure has gone, and a new one has come. This gathering is a new wineskin. Lord, pour in the new wine."

Freeman Miller, vice chair of the EMM board and chair of the representative council, moderated the "new wineskin" assembly and introduced Mary Kolb, a member of the board planning group that birthed the representative council.

To illustrate the new role the representative council has of providing relational connection between EMM staff, board and constituency while promoting vision and mission, Kolb wrapped colored tape around a four-legged stool.

"EMM is like a stool," Kolb said. "One leg represents the staff in sunny yellow, another the board in secure blue, another the constituency in green, and the fourth God through the Holy Spirit in royal purple."

Then Kolb inserted the connecting rungs of the stool, outlining them in bright pink to illustrate the representative council, which ties together the four legs to create a strong, sturdy stool.

First-person reports and stories from four EMM missionaries serving in Central and South Asia were a highlight of the afternoon.

Orpha Gehman, who served for nine years as an English teacher in Vietnam, told how she used student's questions about U.S. holidays and culture as a venue for sharing the gospel story.

Others, who serve in a sensitive Muslim context, spoke of the challenges of ministry in a setting where believers in Jesus face hardships for their faith, and the good news must be discussed discretely.

EMM staff shared answers to frequently asked questions, and there was an open mic time to clarify the role and job description of the new assembly.

The core of the first representative council is comprised of all of EMM's former board members.

In addition, all partnering conferences —Lancaster Mennonite Conference, Franklin Mennonite Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference, New York Mennonite Conference and Good News Fellowship—are invited to send one representative council member per congregation. Larger congregations may send one for each 100 church members.

Janelle Zook from Bethlehem (Pa.) Community Fellowship, takes an acorn used during the commission. Jonathan Charles is far left, and Howard Rice in the center.

The EMM board is also working on a memo of understanding for other churches and networks that would like to have members on the representative council.

The next two meetings of the representative council are planned for Aug. 29 and Jan. 30, 2010. The council plans to meet several times each year.

Following an open mic time, Miller blessed and commissioned the members of the new EMM representative council by passing out wooden acorns—a reminder of their new role in advocacy and "seed planting" where the church is not yet.

This definitely is what we as a church want to be involved in.
—Tonya Powell

"There was quite a buzz as this group of nearly 100 people from partnering conferences and congregations assembled," said Leon Miller, EMM's director of church relations. "Some came from as far away as Alabama, but most were within a two-hour driving distance."

"I'm excited about being part of the representative council," said Tonya Powell, who represented Church of the Overcomer, a Lancaster Mennonite Conference congregation near Philadelphia. "This definitely is what we as a church want to be involved in."—*Jewel Showalter of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

Pa. Mennonites help Indiana churches

Blooming Glen Mennonite Church's pancake breakfast raises $8,200.

Robin Long

Will Bergey (foreground) pours batter onto a griddle at Blooming Glen (Pa.) Mennonite Church's April 19 pancake breakfast fund-raiser for Mennonite congregations in Elkhart County, Ind.

In 1999, the Eastern Pennsylvania area experienced a drought that lasted throughout the summer. Farms were severely affected as their crops were declared a total disaster.

The local Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) board approached farmers in Bucks and Montgomery counties to ask how they could help. The request was for hay to feed livestock.

MDS then asked farmers in other areas if they would be willing to donate hay, to which there was a positive response.

One farm, Penn View Farms in Perkasie, Pa., was the recipient of two trailers of hay, one from Canada and one from the Midwest.

Paul Hockman of Penn View Farms was amazed by this gift, especially with the quality.

We received not only hay, but the best quality; they gave the First Fruits harvest to us.—Paul Hockman

"We received not only hay but the best quality; they gave the First Fruits harvest to us," says Hockman.

That hay saved many farms in our area and saw them through the summer months. This act of mutual aid resonated in our church family history. In the past year there was a different kind of drought in the Goshen/Elkhart, Ind., area, this one being a lack of jobs. The area is home to the largest recreational vehicle manufacturers and employs thousands.

As the economy worsened, so did the unemployment rate, which is now at almost 20 percent (see box below). As stories of brothers and sisters in this area began to surface and multiply, Firman Gingerich, lead pastor of Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, had an epiphany—why not organize a mutual aid effort that would raise funds to help our brothers and sisters in the Goshen and Elkhart area?

As he shared the idea with others, fond memories of the gifts of hay came to people's minds. Ultimately, Firman's epiphany developed into the "Because We Care" pancake breakfast on April 19; all donations were sent to the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference for families in need. He connected with Heidi King from that conference and outlined the idea of the fund-raiser, estimating a possible donation of $3,500-$4,000.

As the plan began to roll out, Blooming Glen's Luanne Grasse was asked to coordinate the breakfast from start to finish.

The idea was communicated to the congregation during worship one Sunday in February.

From that day Luanne had 24 volunteers, as well as donations of all the sausage from Hatfield Quality Meats, food from Landis Market and beverages from Paul and John Hockman at Penn View Farms.

Blooming Glen prioritized dialogue about mutual aid opportunities at home as some in our congregation and local community were experiencing the effects of the economy as well.

The congregation's mutual aid resources were utilized more than ever. The pastors continued to raise awareness of these resources and began to understand the needs that could be satisfied. And finally, the pancake breakfast raised $8,200, far exceeding the original estimate.—*Robin Long*

Trouble in Elkhart County

Many Mennonites and Amish in Elkhart County, Ind., were employed by companies manufacturing recreational vehicles or companies related to that industry. The current recession has devastated the industry, primarily due to a lack of credit available for customers wanting to purchase these products. One year ago the county's unemployment rate was 5.8 percent. In March it was 18.9 percent, the largest jobless rate increase of any metropolitan area in the country. The same problems affect LaGrange County to the east, also home to many Mennonites and Amish.—*Everett Thomas*

MennoPrank Society invites pranksters

Nelson Kraybill recounts his 1974 pie catapult prank; later Kraybill pranked.

Mary E. Klassen

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary president Nelson Kraybill with wet pants after a water tank hidden in the lectern sprayed him.

The MennoPrank Society, launched on May 13 at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., extends an invitation to pranksters on all higher education campuses in the Mennonite church to join in the fun.

At the May 13 launch of the society, J. Nelson Kraybill, president of AMBS, recounted his 1974 prank at Goshen (Ind.) College, which earned the distinction of being the college's Prank of the Century.

Then Kraybill inducted Don Steider, AMBS director of maintenance, into the MennoPrank Society because of a prank he perpetrated at a recent event in Kraybill's honor.

The Goshen College prank involved building a catapult that sent a pie flying up from the balcony of College Mennonite Church to hit the back of Paul Miller, an AMBS professor, who was speaking in the chapel service on the topic of demonology.

Though Kraybill kept his responsibility for this act secret for 10 years, he now recounts it when he speaks to church and college groups.

Knowing this inclination for horseplay, Steider and Nate Koets, AMBS assistant supervisor of maintenance, devised a plan to turn the tables on Kraybill at a banquet on May 1.

The seminary board, employees and spouses had gathered that evening to celebrate Kraybill's presidency before he leaves AMBS in summer.

Toward the end of the program, Kraybill stepped to the lectern to speak. About 10 seconds later, he jumped back to reveal that his pants were soaked with water halfway between his belt and his knees, and water was dripping down his pant legs.

The two pranksters had rigged a small pressurized water tank to spray a fine mist from a tube mounted on a shelf in the lectern.

The experience prompted Kraybill to establish the MennoPrank Society and to honor Steider by welcoming him into it. The charter says: "Given that Mennonites sometimes take ourselves too seriously and otherwise fail to celebrate the whimsical grace of God, MennoPrank Society was established to bring raucous laugher to the hallowed halls of Mennonite higher education institutions in North America."

The purpose is to "raise the standard of high jinks in the Anabaptist tradition, explore missional implications of pranksterism in a postmodern society and affirm outstanding acts of buffoonery."

The charter also outlines clear guidelines for future pranks, stating they must show ingenuity and innovation, not damage buildings or property, not create undue work for staff, be morally decent and ethical and involve no risk of harm.

A final criterion protects society members: New pranks must target no one who has already been a victim of an award-winning MennoPrank. (See full details at www.ambs.edu/MennoPrank.)

In addition to a certificate, Steider received a silver cup, purchased at a local resale shop, which will be passed on to the next new society member. The award also promises to include $1 million, which Steider will receive in increments of one dollar a year as long as he lives.

In a 1994 *Festival Quarterly* article, Kraybill describes the pie-catapult prank in detail, including his eventual confession to and forgiveness from Miller. Kraybill concludes the article, saying, "If there is any justice in this world, a pie awaits me somewhere in the future. All I ask of devils who deliver it is, do it with imagination!"

Although Kraybill hopes he is now immune to further pranks because of the Society's rules, he extends the invitation to others for imaginative mischief.—*Mary E. Klassen of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary*

> If there is any justice in this world, a pie awaits me somewhere in the future.
> —J. Nelson Kraybill

Hesston College graduates 156 students

Jim Yoder and Jim Mason of Hesston College address graduates on May 3.

Larry Bartel

From left, freshman Breezie Sims, graduate Selamawit Mamo, freshman Brittany Albrecht, graduate Fernanda Barros, and freshman Jessica Juhnke pose for a photo.

Hesston (Kan.) College graduated 156 students on May 3, and Jim and Jim were in the gym to address them before they received their diplomas.

Representing the "lofty" world of academia, 36-year veteran of the science faculty Jim Yoder was dressed in full regalia and spoke from the bucket of a cherry picker high above the grads, their families and friends.

Jim Mason, director of campus facilities, stood below stage level, wore jeans and a polo shirt, and represented the "down-to-earth" aspects of a college education. "I see what goes on outside the classroom ... in the dorms, cafeteria, here in the gym and often in the evenings," Mason said. "I know these people outside the classroom and I have an idea—perhaps even better than you—how much these graduation candidates have grown and matured over their years here—ways that go far beyond the classroom."

"I must agree with that, Jim," Yoder said. "But I still say, first of all, the mind must be what we call liberated so that we are not prisoners of thoughts and ideas that are not our own. We have to be able to think for ourselves—to be lifelong learners ... after all, the classroom is what makes this an academic institution."

As Yoder and Mason continued their dialogue, Yoder descended from his cherry picker, and Mason climbed the steps to the stage, meeting together at the podium.

"I think the total Hesston experience is what we are celebrating today for these graduates," Mason said.

Mason and Yoder concluded their address using the symbol of a candle, which requires the integration of wax and wick in order to be useful in illuminating darkness, and stated that each graduate would receive a candle as a symbol of the best of Hesston College's integrated education and the wisdom and light that the grads will spread as they go out from Hesston.

Forty-six of the graduates were members of the Hesston College Nursing Program, which held its pinning ceremony May 2 at Hesston Mennonite Church. Gloria Solis, a 1980 Hesston nursing grad and chief nursing officer/CEO at St. Luke's East in Lee Summit, Mo., shared a meditation, "Let the Celebration Begin!"

"We don't just have jobs, we have callings," Solis told the graduates. "We have gifts. We have the power to help people go to sleep at night and wake up in the morning with their mind and soul intact."

Clarence Rempel, associate conference minister for Western District Conference, shared a message with the five Pastoral Ministries students and their spouses commissioned at Hesston Mennonite Church on May 2.

Other weekend activities on May 2 included recognition for six Disaster Management graduates, a reception for seven aviation graduates, a concert by the Bel Canto Singers and the annual Larkfest awards and recognition ceremony for sophomores.—*Carol Duerksen*

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CALENDAR

No Longer Alone Ministries is pleased to present **Resounding Joy: An Evening Of Music For Instrument And Voice**. This dynamic concert will be held Aug. 7; 7:30 p.m., at ***Lancaster Mennonite School Fine Arts Center***, 2176 Lincoln Highway East, Lancaster, Pa. The public is invited to attend at no charge. A freewill offering will be received to benefit No Longer Alone Ministries, which provides supportive, caring services to individuals experiencing significant mental illness and their families. For more information, please call No Longer Alone Ministries at 717-390-4891.

PULSEations 2009 "Service with a Spin" June 17, 6-8 p.m. at Union Project. Support young leaders and celebrate the Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience (formerly MennoCorps) at the Union Project, 801 N. Negley. PULSEations will include drinks and refreshments, DJ Gordy's soul tunes, a raffle and an exhibition of the collective work of current PULSE participants. Ride your bike to PULSEations and receive a free raffle ticket. $10 in advance (online only at http://www.mennocorps.org/pulseations 2009.html), $15 at the door, $20 VIP (receive a PULSE t-shirt)

WORKERS

Dula, Michelle, was licensed as Associate Pastor of Christian Formation at Blossom Hill Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on May 17.

Goertz, Charles "Chuck," was installed as senior pastor at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa., on May 3.

Graber, Daniel, ended a term as intentional interim pastor at West Swamp Mennonite Church, Quakertown, Pa., on April 30.

Graber, Rose Waltner, ended a term as pastor at Upper Milford Mennonite Church, Zionsville, Pa., on April 19.

Hollinger, Cheryl Sell, was licensed as Christian education director at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa., on May 3.

Horst, Barbara Unruh, was ordained as pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Reinholds, Pa., on May 3.

Koehn, Errol, will be licensed as pastor at Gospel Fellowship Church, Montezuma, Kan., on June 14.

Koehn, Virginia, will be licensed as minister of pastoral care at Gospel Fellowship Church, Montezuma, Kan., on June 14.

Litwiller, Christina, was licensed as pastor at Salina Mennonite Church, Salina, Kan., on May 31.

Wenger, James, ended a term as intentional interim pastor at Conestoga Mennonite Church, Morgantown, Pa., on May 10.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Bender, Morgyn Elyse, May 11, to Kelby and Leanne McNeil Bender, Kalona, Iowa.

Bohnert, Xavier Gage Birky, May 4, to Brian and Angie Birky Bohnert, Denver, Colo.

Bromley, Sophia Lee, Feb. 14, to Korey and Monica Miller Bromley, Middlebury, Ind.

Himes, Hannah Ethel, May 8, to Kevin and Jen Grim Himes, Wooster, Ohio.

Huebert-Stauffer, Sapphire Diana, April 23, to Christopher Stauffer and Miriam Huebert-Stauffer, Canton, Kan.

Kopper, Noah Philip, April 30, to Ryan and Sara Bedsworth Kopper, Newton, Kan.

Kratz, Sophia Grace, May 13, to Jeremy and Leah Emery Kratz, Harrisonburg, Va.

Langenderfer, Margaret Mae, April 21, to Larry and Kim Smith Langenderfer, Archbold, Ohio.

Knepp, Maya Hope, May 16, to Rodney and Eve Aeschliman Knepp, Harrisonburg, Va.

Mast, Micah Joseph, May 1, to Joseph and Marie Johnson Mast, Millersburg, Ohio.

Miller, Joezella Mae, May 3, to Joe and Nezel Sandoval Miller, Goshen, Ind.

Miller, Reagan Lynn, May 13, to Terry and Juanita Classen Miller, Sarasota, Fla.

Nussbaum, Colton Blake, May 12, to Chad and Michelle Weaver Nussbaum, Dayton, Va.

Ratigan-Green, Siobhan Claire, April 19, to John Ratigan and Kristin Green, Minneapolis, Minn.

Smucker, Thomas Joseph, May 1, to Joseph and Teresa Loss Smucker, Iowa City, Iowa.

Stitely, Ryan Malachi, May 15, to Caleb and Sarah Miller Stitely, Harrisonburg, Va.

Tellado, Simion Auriel, May 5, to Alex and Tema Gerber Tellado, Souderton, Pa.

Troyer, Noah Reuben, May 5, to Jonathan and Nicole Miller Troyer, Sugarcreek, Ohio.

Zerger, Adelin Mae, April 21, to Todd and Krisha Keimig Zerger, Salina, Kan.

MARRIAGES

Gross/Moyer: Kimberly Gross, Perkasie, Pa., and Benjamin Moyer, Doylestown, Pa., May 9, at Blooming Glen, Pa.

Hostetler/Schoenegge: Josh Hostetler, Hartville, Ohio, and Samantha Schoenegge, Hartville, May 9, at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Hartville.

"For the Record" is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. To submit information, log on to www.TheMennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access our online forms. You can also submit information by email, fax or mail:

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"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

DEATHS

Balzer, Waldo Irvin, 98, Newton, Kan., died May 1. Spouse: Ruth Mosiman Balzer (deceased). Parents: Peter and Mary Schmidt Balzer. Children: Mike, Janet Franz, Larry; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: May 5 at Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, Kan.

Flaming, Helen Adeline Reimer Goerzen, 93, Reedley, Calif., died March 14. Spouse: Hinshaw "Hank" Flaming (deceased). Spouse: Jacob Goerzen (deceased). Parents: Abraham and Julia Reimer. Children: Bill Goerzen, Myrna Schneider, Walter Goerzen, Richard Goerzen; 11 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 23 at First Mennonite Church, Reedley.

Gable, Lorene Smith, 80, Orrville, Ohio, died May 1 following a short illness. Spouse: Chester W. Gable. Parents: William and Layona McDorman Smith. Children: Gary W., Cathy Gable, Barb Steiner; three grandchildren. Funeral: May 7 at Orrville Mennonite Church.

Gerber, Earl E., 88, Hastings, Neb., died April 20. Spouse: Helen A. Oswald Gerber. Parents: Joseph and Ida Yoder Gerber. Children: Susanne Smith, Pat Pauls, Carole Denlinger, Terry; nine grandchildren. Funeral: April 25 at Holechek Funeral Home, Chappel, Neb.

Groom, Nelson Joe, Sr., 67, Linden, Tenn., died April 28. Spouse: Faith Strickland Groom. Parents: William F. and Olivia D. Groom. Children: Kelly G. Dumire, Sharon F. Groom, Nelson J., Jr.. Funeral: May 4 at Huntington Mennonite Church, Newport News, Va.

Hassan, William Richard "Dick," 87, Goshen, Ind., died April 28. Spouse: Hazel Nice Hassan. Parents: Clair and Bertha Franz Hassan. Funeral: May 1 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Helmuth, Fern Zehr, 91, Arthur, Ill., died April 19. Spouse: Orva Helmuth. Parents: Daniel and Katie Zehr. Children: Harold, Elizabeth Schulz, Maurice, Omar; 10 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 22 at Arthur Mennonite Church.

Housman, J. Harold, 81, Lititz, Pa., died April 25 of Parkinson's disease. Spouse: Miriam Miller Housman. Parents: Ricardo L. and Anna Mae Stehman Housman. Children: John Pierre, Ina Sue Fox, Heidi Jean Oberholtzer. Funeral: April 29 at East Petersburg Mennonite Church, East Petersburg, Pa,

Keeler, Laverne M., 77, Souderton, Pa., died April 22. Parents: Henry and Florence Moyer Keeler. Funeral: April 26 at Souderton Mennonite Home.

Lyndaker, Warren Glenn, 75, Croghan, N.Y., died April 17 of cancer. Spouse: Nancy Yvonne Dennison Lyndaker. Parents: Reuben and Adah May Lehman Lyndaker. Children: Scott, Todd, Brett; six grandchildren. Funeral: April 20 at First Mennonite Church of New Bremen, Lowville, N.Y.

Moyer, J. Edward, 94, Lansdale, Pa., died May 12. Spouse: Frances Apple Moyer (deceased). Parents: Theodore F. and Lucy Moyer. Child: Jay; four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 16 at Dock Woods Community Chapel, Lansdale.

Moyer, Mary Jane Ziegler, 72, Harleysville, Pa., died May 5. Spouse: Herbert Lee Moyer. Parents: Raymond H. and Sally Clemens Ziegler. Children: Beth Ann Wierwille, Eric Z., Clark Z., Dean Z., Todd Z.; six grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: May 8 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville.

Norr, Carol M., 68, Berne, Ind. and Goshen, Ind., died May 12 of A.L.S. Parents: Merlin and Trella Liechty Norr. Funeral: May 16 at First Mennonite Church, Berne.

Olson, David, 72, New Holland, Pa., died April 24 of a stroke. Spouse: Shelba Sandiford Olson. Parents: David and Miriam Garland Olson. Children: Bobbi Schenk, David, Jr., Kimberly Olson, Jason, Christopher, Richard Wong; nine grandchildren. Funeral: May 9 Hershey Mennonite Church, Kinzers, Pa.

Oyer, Pauline, 95, Goshen, Ind., died May 5. Parents: Edward and Ellen Smith Oyer. Funeral: June 13 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Philipp, Luise Janzen Lebedeff, 98, Reedley, Calif., died April 1. Spouse: Paul Philipp (deceased). Spouse: Victor Lebedeff (deceased). Parents: Henry and Susana Janzen. Step-children: Agnes, Walter, Bob, Calvin. Funeral: April 7 at Reedley Cemetery.

Schrag, Paul J., 99, Marion, S.D., died April 20. Spouse: Ada Gering Schrag (deceased). Parents: Rev. John J.A. and Katie Miller Schrag. Children: Mary Tecklenburg, Judy Rechnagel, Doug; seven grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 24 at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Stutzman, Thelma F. Stutzman, 74, Beaver Crossing, Neb., died May 4. Spouse: Richard Stutzman. Parents: Clarence and Ethel Jantzi Stutzman. Children: Gordon, Vickie Roth, Jeri Knapp; 10 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 8 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford, Neb.

Suzuki, Henry I., 89, Lansdale, Pa., died April 24 of head injuries sustained in a fall. Spouse: Ryoko Kitamura Suzuki (deceased). Parents: Jusaburo and Nobu Itakura Suzuki. Children: Yumi, Lester; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: May 1 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.

Vanderveer, Ruth Markley, 95, Leo, Ind., died April 30. Spouse: Merrill Vanderveer (deceased). Parents: William and Vera Burns Markley. Children: Marcia Neuhouser, Lowell, Loyal; eight grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 3 at North Leo Mennonite Church.

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Albuquerque Mennonite Church, a growing urban congregation, seeks ***half-time associate pastor for youth ministry***. Desired candidate will work with lead pastor in Christian formation, is committed to Christ's way of peace and justice, is grounded in the Anabaptist tradition and willing to actively encourage and teach our youth. Candidate will understand dynamics of urban youth environment, advocate Mennonite higher education and connections to the larger church. For full position description and contact information visit www.abqmennonite.org.

Goshen College seeks program ***director/instructor for growing American Sign Language and Interpreting major/minor*** to begin fall semester of the 09-10 academic year. Responsibilities include teaching upper-level ASL-English Interpreting and related courses, oversight of internships and continued program development. Ph.D. preferred, master's degree required, in linguistics, education, sign language interpreting or related field; multicultural experience preferred; ASLTA certification or working toward certification. To apply, see position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment. Goshen College, an affirmative action employer, is a liberal arts institution affiliated with Mennonite Church USA.

Homestead Mennonite Church, located in South Florida, seeks a ***full-time, bilingual (English and Spanish) lead pastor*** with a heart for outreach and community involvement. The congregation believes that the kingdom of God consists of people of every language group, class and race and envisions a pastor who is called to join our church community as one of us, helping us complete the transition from a traditional Mennonite mission church to a vital, redemptive, Anabaptist congregation that represents and reflects the local growing, diverse community. For more information, contact Drane Reynolds at 305-662-6990 or wdrane@hotmail.com.

Pleasant Lake Mennonite Church, located in northeast Indiana, is seeking a ***full-time pastor*** to direct the church's children/youth ministry. Send resumés to plmchurch@gmail.com.

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When something takes the babies

Michael A. King, Telford, Pa., is pastor of Spring Mount (Pa.) Mennonite Church, publisher of Cascadia Publishing House LLC and editor of *DreamSeeker Magazine*.

She pulled out dry grass. Then she hopped into a bush to weave it in. Alerted to the new construction project, all of us kept tabs on it and celebrated as the robin, joined often by her mate, completed a fine round condo. Soon four eggs, colored, yes, robin's-egg blue, nestled in it.

She began sitting duties. To avoid unsettling her, mostly we watched from afar. Except when she left, we allowed ourselves to gaze right into the nest built just inches from a window. We also took in the dramas that erupted when bad birds or squirrels drew too near.

At last the big day came: nest turns maternity ward. Commotion everywhere. Soon an image arrives that seems almost cliché come to life: Papa or Mama with a fat, dangling worm.

Then tragedy. Nest empty. No little birds. A bad thing has befallen the robin family. Deflation hits our human family.

Just one more nest emptied by a predator. Just one more reminder of how truly nature is, as Alfred Lord Tennyson famously put it, "red in tooth and claw." But the nest had seemed so alive, its bird family such a sign of spring, new beginnings, the ability of even tiny brains to prepare for, give birth to and care for children. It was hard not to ponder what to make of the stillness and its mute testimony to the reality that things go not only right but often wrong.

If faith is to be worth much at all, then it needs to face squarely the predations both robins and people face.

I wondered what this might say about human families. And I found my mind wandering toward all the torn pieces in those many circles of family radiating back from and in front of me. I thought of that shotgun ending a life in that pasture. Of that broken pelvis leading to the meningitis that killed her when, as taking the meds became once more a struggle, she jumped out her window. Of the predisposition toward anxiety and depression that seems to run through generation after generation in one family wing. Of those who to a child once seemed giants have been felled by strokes, cancer, dementia.

I thought of how often over the years I've heard from or about those suffering faith crises when the trust that "God will take care of you," as Civilla and Walter Martin put it in their gospel song, smashes into the reality that this woe, that frailty, the relentless winding down age brings will end at a graveside ceremony where those gathered will seek assurance that God does still take care.

And I thought this: If faith is to be worth much at all, then it needs to face squarely the predations both robins and people face. Does faith pass the test? Often not. We keep faith alive by telling ourselves stories of the times it seems God does care and not telling of the times God seems not to care. I will confess to being tempted to leave church in anger when I hear one more account of how amid the bodies mangled by this accident or that disease, the one giving testimony was miraculously spared by a loving God. Yes? So God was on lunch break when the babies were stolen?

I know which answers to the riddle of vacant nests and a caring God leave me feeling empty myself. I don't know how to solve the riddle. In fact, I'd guess it can't be solved. I protest against simplistic evocations of God's care. Yet does it get us any farther to commit to faith in "Life's a [word not appropriate for *The Mennonite*] and then you die"? Plus it so happens, "Be not dismayed what'er betide," the first line of the Martins' song, can draw my tears.

And what am I or we to make of this: In delving into the history of "God Will Take Care of You," I learned that Civilla also wrote another favorite, "His Eye Is on the Sparrow." But not robins, right? Except Civilla isn't so easily dismissed: She wrote "Sparrow" after visiting the Doolittles, one long bedridden, the other confined to a wheelchair. Yet brightness surrounded them. When asked why, reported Civilla, Mrs. Doolittle said simply that "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me."

A day after I found the nest empty, two robins scrambled off the roof near the nest. Down they flew to the lawn to pull at worms. If they were the bereft parents, God's eye on their children hadn't spared them. I doubt their robin theology was better than mine at making sense of that riddle. Still, amid death, they were alive. I dared hope that if not in the answers they and I don't have, then at least in our riddles God lurks. TM

The reviews below are available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

Reasoning Together: A Conversation on Homosexuality by Ted Grimsrud and Mark Thiessen Nation (Herald Press, 2009, $17.99) presents the arguments of two Mennonite theologians, who make their respective cases with in-depth examinations of what the Scriptures teach about homosexuality and what the empirical evidence tells us about God's homosexual children.

Promise and Peril: Understanding and Managing Change and Conflict in Congregations by David R. Brubaker (The Alban Institute, 2009, $18) brings the tools of organizational theory and research to the task of understanding the dynamics of congregational conflict.

A Story of Rhythm and Grace: What the Church Can Learn from Rock and Roll About Healing the Racial Divide by Jimi Calhoun (Brazos Press, 2009, $15.99) is by a musician and pastor who uses his experiences in both arenas to help readers dissect racial relation issues.

The Eighth Day of Creation: An Anthology of Christian Scripture by C. Clifton Black (Eerdmans, 2008, $24) arranges 568 passages, familiar and strange, from the King James Bible that take up recurring ideas and frames them complementarily.

Radical Forgiveness by Antoinette Bosco (Orbis, 2008, $16) argues that the fruit of forgiveness is "to give room for good things to run wild."

Visits With the Amish: Impressions of the Plain Life by Linda Egenes (University of Iowa Press, 2008, $17.95) describes the life of Old Order Amish in southeastern Iowa. It includes woodcuts by Mary Azarian.

Naming the Child: Hope-filled Reflections on Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Death by Jenny Schroedel (Paraclete Press, 2009, $14.99) includes stories, reflections and practical information about what can be done after the death of a child.

Rowan's Rule: The Biography of the Archbishop of Canterbury by Rupert Shortt (Eerdmans, 2009, $30) explores how the remarkable events of Rowan Williams' life have shaped his beliefs and practices today.

Grief, Grace and Hope: The Autobiography of Pakisa K. Tshimika by Pakisa K. Tshimika (Good Books, 2009, $11.95) traces the formative moments of Tshimika's life, from growing up in Congo to his life in the United States. His story includes multiple tragedies—as well as triumphant graces—that touched the lives of many friends and relatives.

Catherine de Hueck Doherty: Essential Writings, selected and with an introduction by David Meconi (Orbis, 2009, $16), includes writings by the Russian-born aristocrat who dedicated her life to promoting "the gospel without compromise." Her life combined a deep spirituality with a commitment to social justice.

The Dark Night: A Gift of God by Daniel P. Schrock (Herald Press, 2009, $16.99) tries to demystify this phenomenon, which is often confused with depression. He roots the dark night in Scripture and explores how it can express itself in one's vocation, marriage and family life, and even in the life of a congregation.

The Burning Bush: On the Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God by Sergius Bulgakov, translated by Thomas Allan Smith (Eerdmans, 2009, $28) refutes the Roman Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception and discusses the Orthodox veneration of the Mother of God.

TMail
An e-zine of The Mennonite magazine
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Everett J. Thomas

Don't abort the truth

We believe in the sacredness of all life—from conception to natural death. But we need to find language other than "pro-life" and "pro-choice" to articulate our beliefs.

First, not all who identify themselves as pro-life are completely pro-life. They may be opposed to abortions but support the death penalty for convicted murderers or support wars that kill both the enemy and innocent people.

Second, not all who identify themselves as pro-choice are willing to extend the choice to live to an unborn baby. But we believe in this "choice." Mennonite Church USA's 2003 statement on abortion says, "The fetus in its earliest stages (and even if imperfect by human standards) shares humanity with those who conceived it."

On May 17, President Obama came to northern Indiana to give a commencement speech at the University of Notre Dame and receive an honorary degree. For weeks before the event and on that Sunday, those of us who live in the area were subjected to local newscasts showing strident demonstrators. They objected to the president's visit because of his views on abortion. Dozens of demonstrators were arrested for trespassing on the Notre Dame campus. Some were pushing baby carriages with dolls inside—the dolls covered with fake blood. Trucks with graphic pictures of severed fetus body parts were parked in strategic locations. For days a small plane flew over the area pulling a banner with equally graphic images.

Viewing life from the point of view of a killer's mother is one way to touch its sanctity.

But "protests against abortion have greater integrity when they are combined with concern for all human life," says the Mennonite Church USA statement.

Sister Helen Prejean, author of the book *Dead Man Walking* and activist against the death penalty, addressed the Associated Church Press convention in Indianapolis on May 7. During the question-and-answer period one person wanted to know what this diminutive but fiery Catholic nun thought of the controversy at Notre Dame.

"Using terms such as 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice' is facile labeling," she said during her response. Prejean said that if we believe in the sanctity of life, then it must also apply to the lives of people on death row—no matter how horrific their crimes and no matter how unrepentant the sinner.

A Gallup Poll released on May 15 reported that 51 percent of U.S citizens now call themselves pro-life instead of pro-choice on the issue of abortion. This is the first time in the 15 years that Gallup has been asking the question that a majority of Americans reveal themselves to be pro-life.

But it is a false dichotomy and one Mennonites must continue to resist. It is not our conviction that the killing of life in the womb is wrong while the taking of life in an electric chair or on the battlefield is right. Life is either sacred or it is not.

A good friend of mine who also listened to Sister Helen at the Associated Church Press convention found herself converted.

"I always thought if someone took my child's life, then that person deserved the same thing," she said. "But Sister Helen made me think about it from a different point of view: What if it was my child who killed someone. Would I still believe my guilty child should die?"

Viewing life from the point of view of a killer's mother is one way to touch its sanctity. Would the mother who lost her son on the battlefield want the soldier who killed him to also die if the mother of the enemy soldier was her friend?

The term "pro-life" is facile (shallow), but it also means to be "for life." For anyone to be pro-life but also support the death penalty or war is as illogical as being "sorta pregnant."

Mennonite Church USA can help change the national debate about abortion by insisting that all of life is sacred from conception to natural death. Those who claim to be pro-life can be so only if they are as concerned about the lives of convicted criminals or soldiers as they are concerned about the lives of unborn babies. The conviction that all life is sacred needs to come "full-term" and be born as a whole and healthy truth.—*ejt*

The reviews below are available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

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for I was a stranger

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Whose church is it anyway?

Ron Adams is pastor at East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa.

I have been wrestling with the above question for the several months. The question is not sociological. I know well that the congregation belongs to its members and not to its pastor. Pastors come and go, but congregations remain.

That last sentence reveals a bias, I know. With all the data, it may seem unreasonable to say "congregations remain." We are graying, aging, declining in many ways. At conference meetings one detects the anxiety just below the surface, an anxiety born of facts that point to our pending demise as a people. That same anxiety is felt in the larger denomination, as together we try to figure out how to preserve and even restore the church. Preserve it for the next generation and restore it to something like its former dignity and grandeur.

Isn't Jesus Christ the Lord of the church?

But whose church is it anyway? Here I'm asking the question theologically. If all we consider are the facts, if all we read is the data, we can easily succumb to the notion that the church is dying or at least on the road to death. And so we scramble to come up with some new idea of how to make the church more accessible or user-friendly, more missional or in some other way more attractive to those outside. These are all noble pursuits; they are all aspects of our calling to live out the Great Commission. This is what we were created to be and do as church.

But underneath it all is this anxiety, this fear that says we'd better hurry up and grow or else. What's missing from so many of our conversations, strategy sessions and frettings about the state of the church is a clear declaration of the role of the Holy Spirit in the preservation and growth of the church and its mission. Or perhaps it is our lack of believing what we declare to be true. We Mennonites look at the church and the world and think it is somehow up to us to fix the one and save the other. We often behave as if we believe the church will die unless we come up with some brilliant marketing scheme or missional strategy.

But whose church is it anyway? Isn't Jesus Christ the Lord of the church? And didn't he give us the Spirit to ensure the church would thrive and serve God's purposes in the world? Do we believe that the church belongs to Jesus Christ and that the Spirit is still alive and well and working within and among us and in our world and that the body of Christ will endure and continue to be salt and light to the world until Christ returns?

If so, then perhaps we can engage in a little reorientation. Rather than looking at the church and seeing only gray hair and wrinkled faces, maybe we need to look a little deeper and see the light of Christ and the hand of the Spirit. Rather than assuming the church is ours to save and the world ours to gain, perhaps we ought to throw up our hands and call upon the Lord of the church to have his way with us, even if that means smaller gatherings and slimmer offerings. Maybe we need to admit that the church does not belong to us, that we couldn't save it if we tried and that our addiction to the facts too often borders on the unfaithful.

This is not a call to avoid our genuine missional calling. Neither is it whistling past the graveyard.

It is an invitation to wrestle with our theology of the church. What exactly is the Spirit up to among us graying, wrinkled and worried Mennonites? Let's try to discern that and then give thanks before we get to work. TM

TheMennonite

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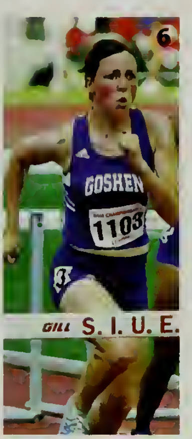

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

U.S. is an out-of-control principality

Thank you much for Everett Thomas' editorial that highlighted the "obscene amount" our national government is spending on its military ("Mennonite Church USA's Identity," May 19). Thomas was right to encourage our delegates in Columbus, Ohio, to discern an appropriate "churchwide effort to confront the military-industrial empire that controls our lives as the Roman Empire did in Jesus' day."

While every government is fallen, the one over us has embraced deceit and violence. It has jumped the tracks and is running amok. We saw this with the illegal invasion of Iraq. We see it again now in the expansion of war in Afghanistan and the daily bombings in Pakistan. And we will see it far into the future through a steady diet of government propaganda that makes the American people afraid and then offers violence as our savior. As Thomas pointed out in the editorial, this leads inexorably to the militarization of our society. It also leads us away from our Lord. Our witness to the light will take many forms, I expect, including the one Thomas highlighted in the editorial. But all will be grounded in an understanding that as followers of Christ we are engaged in a spiritual struggle against an out-of-control principality called the United States of America. May the Spirit lead the delegates to courageous wisdom regarding this vital aspect of our discipleship.—*Berry Friesen, Lancaster, Pa.*

Do not be afraid

Thanks for Larry Miller's column "Overcoming Fear in a Financial Storm" (Leadership, May 19). We need the reminders that this current situation is not all bad. God is always at work around us and always in the most difficult, dark and dangerous places. We are called to be faithful, fearless followers, no matter what happens. Let's remind ourselves and each other of the many biblical stories where God's people were told, "Don't be afraid." —*Margaret Metzler, Goshen, Ind.*

Prisoner offers suggestions

Regarding the article "Mennonite Churches Discern If and How to Minister to Convicted Sex Offenders" (April 21): If there is a third way it is to take each person and situation on a case-by-case basis. Nothing else makes real world sense.

I have spent many years in prison. My case is still in the absurdist court system. Although the categorization of "sex offender" is far too broad, as Groff's article hints, I have never run into anyone in prison for a so-called "sex crime" who would readily admit it (because of the stigma) except for a few who have dedicated their lives to child sex—and such do indeed exist. You do not want those people in or near your church or your family.

I have worked a variety of so-called sex cases and pass along the following:

1. If someone has copped out in court to a crime of a sexual nature, take their word for it. If they lie about that or attempt to repudiate the cop-out, get away from them. Either they lied to the judge or they are lying to you.

2. Rape cases (and murder cases) are where most innocent prisoners get convicted. DNA has cleared a lot of convicted rapists who were misidentified.—*Robert J. Zani, Tennessee Colony, Texas*

Teach signs of sex abuse

I read with interest the editorial "Sex Offenders in the Church" (April 21) and the response letters in the last two issues. First, there is some distinction between abusers/molesters and pedophiles—not in the damage done but in the number of victims, the power of the illness and the pedophile's apparent lack of ability to control the behavior. My research found that currently there is not a "cure" for pedophilia, although one is being diligently sought. Therefore, these men (and a small percentage of women) must be kept away from children. Many pedophiles will even admit, "I can't control my behavior." For this reason I agree with Paul Unruh when he suggests, as one possible solution, house fellowships in which there are no children and where the members are willing to support and minister to the abuser and to the family of an abuser who experience great grief and shame.

IN THIS ISSUE

The Bible reminds us that we were "strangers to the covenants of promise" (Ephesians 2:12), and Jesus' parable in Matthew 25:31-46 tells us that when we reach out to strangers we are reaching out to Jesus. Donald Clymer (page 8) and David and Krista Powell (page 17) share experiences they had with so-called "illegal aliens" and call us to show compassion. Bob Lupton (page 12) and poet Cheryl Denise (page 11) warn us about the harm done by "religious tourists" and "professional saviors" respectively. Betsy Headrick McCrae (page 14) offers a study of Mark 1:4-15 that reflects on Jesus' proclamation that God has come near. Everett Thomas interviews outgoing Mennonite Church USA moderator Sharon Waltner (page 20), and Waltner invites us to celebrate what's right in our church (page 18). Assistant editor Anna Groff calls us to open our churches to the leadership gifts of Millennial women (page 32).—*Associate Editor*

In our faithful attempt to care about the abusers, we cannot forget, minimize or invalidate the pain of the victims. It has been my privilege to know many women and children who have dealt with this terrible violation. Some seemed to heal rather quickly; some seemed to partially heal after years of long, painful and expensive work. I have known some for whom the childhood trauma was too painful, and they chose to take their love and beauty, their gifts and talents out of this life. We will never know how our world might have been enriched had they not experienced abuse.

For women and children with no insurance or resources, the healing may never begin. I am not naive; there are sexual abusers in our homes, churches, schools and other places where children gather. We need to teach the signs of a child who has been violated and the signs of an abuser to our congregations. We need to be not paranoid but alert to those situations that give us pause and carefully watch what is happening around us. Some churches have implemented safe sanctuaries to protect their children.

This is a dilemma for Christians and for the church that we cannot ignore. May we seek God's wisdom as we minister to God's people.—*Joan Boyer, Hesston, Kan.*

Don't have to be a club to grow

My reason for writing has to do with membership decline in Mennonite Church USA. What about hitting the issue in a positive way with an ongoing series covering a story in each issue of a church that is attracting new members? One could interview churches that fall in such a category under a heading such as "How God is Helping us Grow His Church in Tim Buck Two."

Grace Mennonite Fellowship, near Harrisonburg, Va., with Richard Early started an outreach about 15 years ago, and now they have a group of over 150 and growing with people mostly from outside the Mennonite fold.

Such a series would help show that we don't have to be the "club" that keeps us status quo. We don't have to keep talking about our failures; they become self-fulfilling prophecies. If we follow biblical methods as demonstrated in the book of Acts, we can still be God's faithful and productive agents in the world pointing people to Christ, our Savior and Lord.—*Eugene Souder, Grottoes, Va.*

Commends Eastern Mennonite University

I commend Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., for its spring issue of *Crossroads* that features "our family of colleges." The articles and photos reveal campuses where students, be they of Mennonite background or not, "discover a rare, exciting combination of service and peacebuilding. They join a community where they are encouraged to explore their higher purpose."

I am convinced that a vast majority of alumni of our schools prefer this kind of collaboration to reach 30,000 students rather than a limited yet expensive competition for the "small pie" of 3,000 prospective Mennonite students. See *Crossroads* at www.emu.edu/crossroads/colleges/.—*J. Daniel Hess, Indianapolis*

Where we have come from and 'whereto'

Mennonite Mission Network, *Mennonite Weekly Review* and *The Mennonite* recently published, in turn, an incisive booklet, a perceptive editorial and a penetrating article reminding us Mennonites about our rich heritage. This triad includes Palmer Becker's "What Is an Anabaptist Christian?" (Missio Dei series, #18), Paul Schrag's "Letting Go of Christendom" (*MWR*, April 27) and John Howard Yoder's "The Church and Economics After Christendom" (*TM*, May 5).

A fourth source is Yoder's *Body Politics* (Herald Press, 2001). We continue needing to think hard about where we have come from in order to sense spiritually and programmatically "whereto."
—*Leonard Gross, Goshen, Ind.*

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

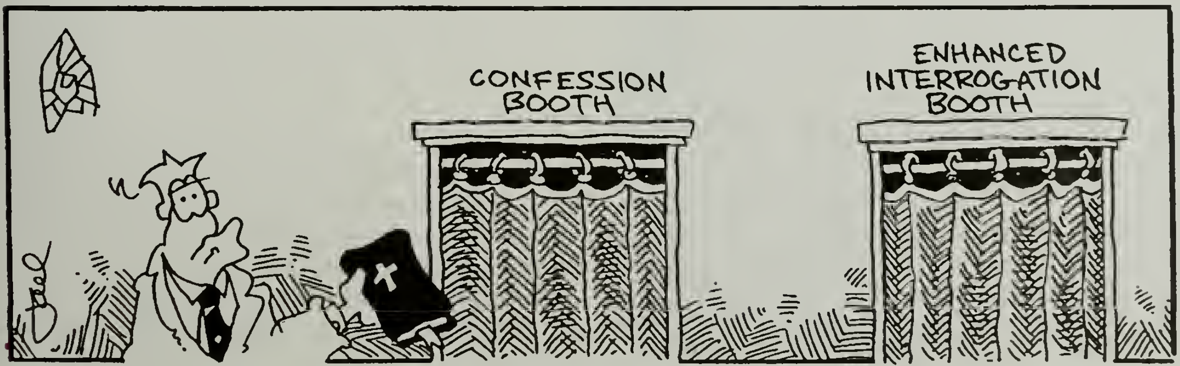
The U.S. economy is: (67 votes)

- ○ Getting better (24%)
- ○ Getting worse (49%)
- ○ Staying the same (13%)
- ○ Not sure (13%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Correction: Luke Drescher's May 19 letter should have been titled, "A Response to the Proposed Corinthian Plan."

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**



Sobering statistic from *USA Today*: Churchgoers approve of using extreme and enhanced interrogation techniques by a 20 percent higher rate than nonchurchgoers (approximately 60.5 percent to 40 percent). Maybe it's all those hours we've spent suffering through long sermons on rock-hard pews.
—*Joel Kauffmann*

IN BRIEF

Anabaptist Chair planned at Fuller

Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., is developing an endowed chair in Anabaptist studies. School of Theology dean Howard Loewen says at least a half dozen faculty at the school "identify explicitly" with the Anabaptist tradition. He says that the Anabaptist presence, which may include about 50 students, adds to a "rich mix" at Fuller, which has some 4,500 students representing more than 120 denominations. He believes Anabaptism brings fresh gifts in areas such as biblical study, Christology, peace and justice, and reconciliation. Loewen hopes the Yoder-McClendon Chair in Anabaptist Studies can be launched as soon as the 2009-10 school year.—*Messenger*

Air at Locust Grove School OK

A *USA Today* article projected that the air around the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School Locust Grove campus might have toxic chemicals at dangerous levels. LMS asked the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to conduct actual tests. According to the tests, the measured level of pollutants at Locust Grove is actually better than state background levels. —*LMS*

Allegations of misconduct, pastor disappears

Joe Rosa

GOSHEN, Ind.—Joe Rosa, who had been pastoring a Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference congregation, disappeared on May 21 after unspecified allegations of misconduct were leveled against him. Rosa had been a pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church in New Columbia, Pa. Lancaster Conference officials declined to provide more information about the nature of the allegations.

"The matter has been reported to the police," said a statement released by Lancaster Conference officials on May 26, "and they are investigating this matter. … We ask for the prayers of believers in our community that the mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be experienced by all involved in this difficult situation."

According to a May 28 article in the *Standard-Journal* of Milton, Pa., state police on horses scoured a heavily wooded area of Kelly Township and spent most of the day on May 26 searching for the pastor. They found no evidence of Rosa and halted the search about 3 p.m.

Rosa, a church planter, also served on Mennonite Church USA's Constituency Leaders Council as a representative from Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church). On May 24, Adalberto Santiago was installed as the new pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church. This change had been planned for some time and was not related to Rosa's disappearance.—*Everett J. Thomas*

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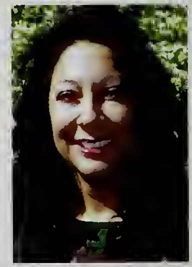
Josh Gleason

Houser invited to World University Games

Goshen (Ind.) College senior Abri Houser (left) competes in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics track and field championships May 21-23 near St. Louis. She earned All-American honors with a personal record in the 400-meter hurdles and qualified for the World University Games this summer in Belgrade, Serbia. She was the only athlete from Mennonite colleges and universities to be invited. Houser, daughter of Gordon and Jeanne Houser, Newton, Kan., also received an Academic Award from the Goshen business department.—*Goshen College*

Ivonne Díaz new IMH Executive Director


Yvonne Díaz

GOSHEN, Ind.—Yvonne Díaz began her role as the new executive director of Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church) on May 4. IMH moderator Juanita Nuñez says, "We are thankful to Yvonne for accepting this great responsibility. Her work will be half-time for now, due to the financial limitations we are experiencing as an organization. We hope that having her will help us further develop the vision and mission we have as part of the body of Christ."—*Meno Acontecer*

Berne, Ind., church changes conferences

GOSHEN, Ind.—On May 10, representatives from Central District Conference and Ohio Mennonite Conference led a ceremony at First Mennonite Church, Berne, Ind., to bless and confirm that congregation's decision to leave Central District and join Ohio Conference. The congregation made the switch in March. The May 10 "releasing-receiving-blessing ceremony" included Central District leaders Lois Kaufmann and Gordon Oyer and Ohio Conference leaders Tom Kauffman and John Rohrer. Berne's interim pastor, Jerry Flueckiger, represented the congregation. As part of the ceremony, Central District leaders passed a candleholder and candle to the Ohio Conference leaders, who then passed them along to the pastor. "It was a Ten Thousand Villages candleholder," said Kaufmann on June 1, "with human figures surrounding a central candle—a visual symbol of a congregation (or a conference) gathered around the Light."

With 1,107 members, First Mennonite Church was the largest congregation in Central District and represented 17 percent of the conference's membership. Central District Conference will hold its 2009 annual sessions June 25-27 at First Mennonite Church in Sugarcreek, Ohio.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Linda Wingard

ennonite schools meet in state competition

nessa Derstine, left, for Christopher Dock Mennonite High
hool, Lansdale Pa., and Taylor Wenger for Lancaster (Pa.)
ennonite High School, compete at the first-ever
nnsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association game
tween the sister schools on May 29 in Reading, Pa.—*LMS*

With magazine for youth ceases publication

PITTSBURGH—After the final, "Summer 2009," issue of *With*, Faith & Life Resources plans to discontinue the 41-year-old magazine due to declines in subscriptions. Founding editor J. Lorne Peachey said on May 17 that he feels overwhelmed that it lasted 41 years. "I didn't expect it to go this long," he said. Peachey said he thinks the reason *With* "stuck" was that it "told youth the church was interested in them. … I hope the church will find new ways to tell kids they are important." The final issue will celebrate the four decades of *With*. Current editor Carol Duerksen has edited *With* for the past 18 years.—*Anna Groff*

Two Mennonites among 12 acquitted in Philly

GOSHEN, Ind.—Two Mennonite Church USA members were among 12 protesters acquitted of all charges on May 26 after they were arrested on Jan. 16 (see "Mennonites Join Antigun Violence Rally" in the Feb. 3 issue of *The Mennonite*).

Fred Kauffman, former pastor at West Philly Mennonite Church, and Drick Boyd, a member of that congregation and professor at Eastern University, near Philadelphia, were part of an ecumenical group protesting gun violence at Colosimo's Gun Shop during the Jan. 13-17 gathering "Heeding God's Call: A Gathering on Peace" in Philadelphia. Kauffman is Philadelphia program coordinator for the Mennonite Central Committee.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Mennonites in Mexico support MC Canada

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—Four churches in Mexico who once received financial support from Mennonite Church Canada are now contributing back to the denomination's bottom line. The Mexican church previously received funds from the General Conference Mennonite Church's Commission on Overseas Mission, which in Canada has become known as Mennonite Church Canada Witness. The Conference of Mennonites in Mexico was formed in 1963 with the support of COM.—*Mennonite Church Canada*

Car Sabbath at Faith Mennonite, Minneapolis

MINNEAPOLIS—Faith Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, held its first Car Sabbath on May 24. As a way to decrease the congregation's carbon footprint, the missions and service commission proposed four Car Sabbaths during the year. The commission encouraged members to give their cars an entire day-long Sabbath. Approximately 75 percent of those in attendance arrived without using a car.—*Faith Mennonite Church*

Matching gift provides water for many

SOUDERTON, Pa.—The Care & Share Thrift Shoppes honored volunteers in 2008 at their annual banquet on April 14. Two dams will be built in their honor in the Tonga region of southern Zambia, funded by the Care & Share Thrift Shoppes and matched by Eagles Peak Spring Water in Fountainville, Pa., a locally owned and operated bottled water company.—*MCC*

Honduran earthquake damages churches

STRASBOURG, France—An earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale struck Honduras at about midnight on May 28. Six people have been reported dead and 25 injured throughout the country. Javier Soler, president of Mennonite World Conference-member church Amor Viviente in Honduras, reports that congregations have apparently not suffered casualties but several church buildings have been damaged.—*MWC*

—*Compiled by Anna Groff*

IN BRIEF

Lind receives AMBS award

Millard Lind, professor emeritus of Old Testament at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., is the 2009 recipient of the AMBS Alumni Ministry and Service Award. The theme that defined his vocation was that God's chosen people in the ancient Near East adored Yahweh, Lind said in a 1992 interview. Yahweh is a God of family love, not of the power politics that plagued the region.—*AMBS*

Mennonite could be next WCC leader

German Mennonite theologian Fernando Enns is on the "short list" of church leaders under consideration to become the next General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. He has served on the executive committee of the WCC and has been the visionary behind the Decade to Overcome Violence, an effort by churches around the world to call all the world's people to engage in violence prevention, the pursuit of justice and peacemaking. —*Bridgefolk.net*

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The American dream had turned into a nightmare.

'For I was a stranger

by Donald Clymer

Resident aliens and wandering strangers

My whole life is a lie," she sobbed in Spanish on her hospital bed. "I came here for a better life and have found nothing but disappointments." María's latest setback was an unexpected bout with appendicitis; I was visiting her as a volunteer chaplain.

María had told me she was from Honduras. Her confession came after a telephone call interrupted us and she identified herself as Josefina from Puerto Rico to her social worker. It was obvious she was working and living with a false identity.

Her story is typical of the many undocumented workers I have met. She was working for a clothing manufacturer (maquiladora) in her hometown with a wage that barely covered her expenses. She had two children when her husband abandoned her. Struggling to make ends meet and hoping to provide a brighter future for her two children, she handed them over into her sister's care and took off to the United States without documents. Because of payments to the immigrant smuggler and higher-than-expected living costs in her new land, she had little money left over to send home to her family. The American dream had turned into a nightmare.

María is considered an illegal alien in the United States. However, this is where she lives and works. Her situation allows her few other options. Like María, the Israelites were once "resident aliens in Egypt" (*Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*). After they were liberated from their slavery, they were commanded by God to remember their experience in Egypt. By so doing, they would respond more compassionately to María's situation and invite her in instead of condemning her immigration status.

Jorgé had been in the hospital for more than a week when I met him. He was isolated for fear of tuberculosis. He didn't want to talk to me, another white man with a tie, a clipboard and an assumed agenda. He was from Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. When he learned that I had spent more than three years in his country and was there to stand by him in his pain, he opened up. Slowly but surely, his torturous story unfolded. Lacking employment opportunities and desperate to provide a better life for his family, he left his wife and three children more than 18 months earlier to seek a better life in the United States. He started out with little money, no fixed destination and no legal documents.

Without money, his main means of transportation was hitchhiking and freight trains. Along the way he did odd jobs to sustain himself. The stories of how many people took advantage of his situation were hard to believe: robbery, extortion and abandonment. To their credit, some few compassionate people reached out to him with temporary food and shelter. He reached my city on a freight train suffering from a high fever and a debilitating cough. He got off the train and checked into the Emergency Room of our hospital with no friends, family, money or papers.

Not only is Jorgé considered an illegal alien in the United States, he has no permanent place of residence and is a wandering stranger. Like Jorgé, the Israelites were once "wandering strangers in the wilderness" (*Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*). After they entered the Promised Land and ceased their wandering, God commanded them to remember their experience in the desert. By so doing, they would respond more compassionately to Jorgé's situation and invite him in instead of condemning his immigrant status.

The biblical record on treatment of aliens and strangers is remarkably clear and consistent.

The biblical understanding: The biblical record on treatment of aliens and strangers is remarkably clear and consistent. Throughout the Old Testament, the theme is repeated: "Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt" (Exodus 22:21, NIV). "The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19:34. See also Leviticus 24:22, Numbers 15:15, Deuteronomy 10:19, NIV). By remembering their "foreignness" and "strangeness," the Israelites would be better able to respond compassionately and invite the stranger in. Was this hospitality only extended to "legal" strangers?

Jesus' life exemplified being both an alien and extending hospitality to the stranger. He left the glory of heaven and "made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:7, NIV). By Jesus'

Continued on page 10

and you invited me in'

Remember when you were a stranger, when you were an alien and when you were completely dependent on God.

Continued from page 9

time, the Jews had forgotten their resident alien and wandering stranger status and mostly abandoned hospitality toward the stranger. Instead they set up strict barriers against relating to sinners, tax collectors, Samaritans and other unclean (undocumented?) strangers. In contrast, Jesus extended hospitality to all of them. Luke Bretherton, in his book *Hospitality as Holiness*, states it this way: "Through his hospitality, which has as its focal point actual feasting and table fellowship, Jesus turns the world upside down."

Added to the Old Testament teaching on how to treat the stranger, Jesus' teaching comes from Matthew 25:35: "For I was a stranger and you invited me in." By inviting the stranger in, one invites Jesus in. This invitation is echoed in Hebrews 13:2 (NIV): "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." The Old and the New testaments seem to be in agreement on welcoming the stranger. " 'I was a stranger and you invited me in' resounds throughout the ancient texts," writes Bretherton. Furthermore, "This hospitality is entirely in keeping with Jesus' tradition (Mark 10:21, Luke 16:19-25) and the Old Testament tradition."

Becoming strangers and aliens: Fair treatment for the stranger arises from remembering one's own foreignness and strangeness, like the Israelites in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New. Christine Pohl in her seminal book on hospitality, *Making Room*, writes: "For the Israelites and the early Christians, understanding themselves as aliens and sojourners was a reminder of their dependence on God." Furthermore, she writes, "The periods in church history when hospitality has been most vibrantly practiced have been times when the hosts were themselves marginal to their larger society."

When we forget the transitory nature of our existence on earth, we tend to "build 'extravagant mansions,' and indulge in 'countless other luxuries,' wasting [our] substance on 'inanities,'" writes Pohl, and more often than not we ignore the strangers and foreigners in our midst, being especially inhospitable to undocumented ones. When we remember our "strangeness," our response to the "resident aliens" and "wandering strangers" among us is more compassionate. David Buschart writes: "When faced by a stranger, those who extend the embrace of hospitality have a keen awareness of God's hospitality toward them. Furthermore, this hospitality includes not only a sense of who they are (strangers) and what God has done (embraced them) but also an awareness that what they have to offer in hospitality is ultimately from God" (*Exploring Protestant Traditions*).

Growing up Mennonite in the 1950s, I had little difficulty understanding my strangeness and alien nature in relation to the surrounding culture. Even though that strangeness was reinforced by peculiar dress and theology, I still retain a sense of being different without the peculiar dress. Mennonites, however, have become so assimilated into mainstream culture in the United States that many of my peers—and certainly my children and their peers—do not feel this same strangeness. Therefore, many of us, as Pohl writes, "build 'extravagant mansions' and indulge in 'countless other luxuries,' wasting [our] substance on 'inanities,'" perhaps to the detriment of inviting the stranger in.

How can we return to being "aliens and strangers in the world" (1 Peter 2:11, NIV) and invite María and Jorgé in? The answer is to remember when you were a stranger, when you were an alien and when you were completely dependent on God. If you cannot remember any such time, you should place yourself in situations of marginalization, relate to those who are at the fringe of society or even travel to another place and immerse yourself in that culture as a foreigner.

One story helps me remember my foreignness. I was walking down a street in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, and a man I did not know spit at me and cursed me. He was displeased with U.S. foreign policy in the region. I will not soon forget the anger and hatred in his eyes. I never felt so foreign and strange. Whenever I become too settled with my in-group, my comfort zone, I think of how I felt that day in Honduras. By so remembering, I am more apt to invite in the strangers around me, even the undocumented ones.

Don Clymer teaches Spanish and humanities at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and serves on the pastoral care team at Lindale Mennonite Church and volunteers as a chaplain to Spanish-speaking patients at Rockingham Memorial Hospital in Harrisonburg.

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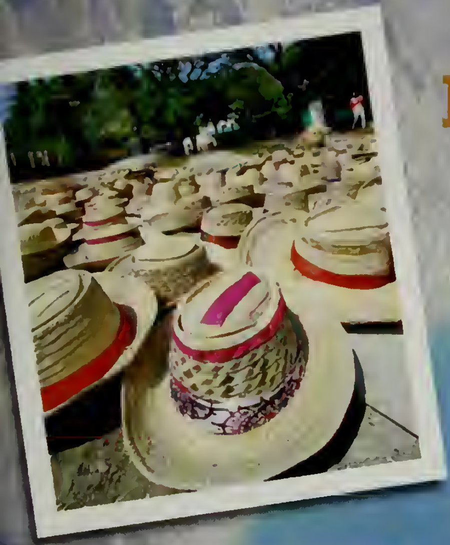
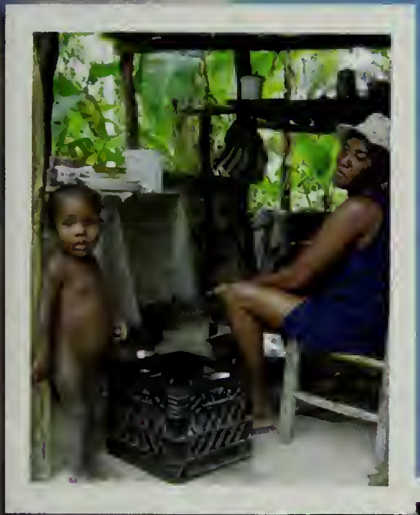




Professional saviors

by Cheryl Denise

I open your letter
thanking me
for my financial and prayer support.
I did neither.
Your weeklong trip to Haiti
changed your life.
Your group's theme verse
Hebrews 11 verse 1
faith in everything.
You built a clinic,
a house, a church
played ball with the natives
smiles substituting for language
ate rice and beans
three times a day.

No I did not pray for you.
And I know I haven't prayed either
for the women dressed bright
weaving new patterns
the toothless men
thrashing sugar cane
or those who make their living
getting saved
    again
        and
            again
for earthly bread
singing hymns in the fields
when a mission group drives

I've heard Haiti has had more missionaries
than any other country.
Maybe the missionaries
are keeping them poor
so we in our churches in the States
can all feel good
taping pictures on our bulletin boards
dropping money in offering plates
for those who board planes
reviewing their plans
passing that feeling on to their kids
who years later
they hope
will go on a mission trip
just like theirs.

Cheryl Denise lives in Philippi, W.V.

Vacation

by Bob Lupton

"They're turning my people into beggars." It was a painful accusation for Juan Ulloa to make. He was a churchman, after all. An elder. With loyalty to the household of faith. But when asked the question directly, he could not lie.

I had pressed him on the relationship of his micro-lending organization to the churches of Nicaragua. Juan was the executive director of a Christian micro-finance ministry that made many thousands of small loans to Nicaraguan peasants. It seemed a reasonable inquiry to understand how they worked together with local churches. Hesitantly at first, Juan explained that there were entire sections of the country where his loan officers could not make any loans at all. These were the regions where a concentration of churches from the United States conducted their mission trips. "People say, Why should we borrow money when the churches give it to us?"

The easy charity of some well-meaning religious tourists is creating a new kind of welfare state.

The people were right, of course. What peasant scratching out a bare existence could refuse suitcases bulging with new clothing for his family? What struggling pastor could resist the temptation to accept a steady salary and generous church income in exchange for hosting visitors, organizing volunteer work and staffing funded programs? What village would borrow money to dig a well or buy books for their school library or save money to build a church if these things were provided for them free of charge? If all they had to do was make their wish lists, show up for the schedule arranged by the donors and smile graciously until their benefactors head back home, who would blame them for accepting this easy charity?

No, Juan was not blaming his people for becoming beggars. He was faulting the affluent, well meaning U.S. church for its unexamined generosity. His accusations, now pouring forth with considerable force, were directed at naive "vacationaries" who spend millions of dollars traveling to his country, perform work that locals could better do for themselves and create a welfare economy that deprives a people of the pride of their own accomplishments—all in the name of Christian service. The unintended consequences of such mission work was undoing the very vision Juan had given his life to—helping his people emerge from poverty through training, entrepreneurship, saving and hard work.

For some reason U.S. churches, filled with results-oriented members, seem oblivious to the abysmal outcomes of many if not most mission trips. Perhaps because it feels so good to be giving to those so much worse off, or because unconditional serving seems so Christ like, the Western church embraces with great pride an unexamined form of charity that our nation as a whole rejected with the passage of the Welfare Reform Act of 1996. We know that welfare creates unhealthy dependency, that it erodes a work ethic, that it does not elevate people out of poverty. Yet in the name of Christ we perpetuate this very welfare principle in the way we do missions. And the trend is growing.

A Princeton University study found that in one year (2005) 1.6 million church members took mission trips—an average of eight days—at a cost of $2.4 billion. And the number has grown every year since. "Religious tourism," as some call it, has become a growth industry. The Web is full of agencies (denominational and parachurch) ready to connect churches to a "meaningful mission experience" in an exotic location rife with human need. The Bahamas, for example, receives one short-term missionary for every 15 residents.

More scornful critics point to the make work nature of many missions trips. Like the wall built on an orphanage soccer field in Brazil that had to be torn down after the visitors left. And the church in Mexico that was painted six times during one summer by six different missions groups. And the church in Ecuador built by volunteers that was never used because the community said it was not needed.

But in fairness to our U.S. churches, many of our motives are noble. We want to excite our members about missions. We want to expose youth and adults to the needs of a hurting world. We want to engage our people in life-changing experiences. We desire to obey the teachings of Christ to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, show compassion to the oppressed and spread the Good News. But because we view missions through the lens of our

aries

Too much 'missions tourism' is based on what will benefit us rather than what will help them.

church—that is, what will benefit our people the most, what will be most rewarding for us, what will appeal the most to our members—we neglect to consider what is in the best interests of those we would serve.

How we serve is equally important to whom we serve. Take the well that my church dug for a rural Honduran village. The remote peasant community needed water. The obvious solution: dig them a well. There was great celebration when the first water was pumped to the surface and villagers filled their jugs with cold, pure water. But when our missionaries returned the following year the pump was idle and locals were again carrying water from a distant supply. We repaired the pump. But by the time we returned the following year it had broken down again. This happened repeatedly year after year. The village simply waited until their benefactors returned.

Compare this experience to the remote mountain village in Nicaragua where a different strategy was employed. A community developer, recruited from the United States and supported by Juan's micro-lending organization, assisted the residents in creating a plan for a much-needed well. She arranged financing conditional upon villagers investing their own money from their meager savings. She then connected them with a reliable Nicaraguan engineer and helped them organize a water commission to set fees, collect water bills, manage finances and maintain their new utility. Village men provided all the labor, digging trenches, laying water lines and setting 250 meters. When the pump was switched on and water surged to the homes, the village erupted with pride. Their water supply, they soon learned, was abundant—sufficient to allow them to sell water to the adjacent village. They now owned and managed a wealth-producing asset. The lesson: Never deprive people of the satisfaction of doing for themselves.

"Above all, do no harm." It's the bottom line of the Hippocratic Oath that has guided the conduct of physicians for centuries. It is time for the Western church to apply the same principle.

P.S.: Some believe that short-term mission trips whet the appetite for long-term mission involvement. Research does not support this claim, however. In spite of all the moving testimonies of "life-changing experiences" by returning short-termers and the occasional example of full-time missionaries who point to a mission trip as the catalyst for their calling, there is no evidence that missions as a whole has benefitted. As a matter of fact, while short-term mission trips have increased dramatically over the past two decades, support of long-term missionaries has declined. Strangely, the correlation seems to be inverse. Perhaps because we have spent so lavishly on "religious tourism" we feel that our financial responsibility to missions has been discharged. Or is it that long-term missionaries do not serve the immediate self-interest of our church?

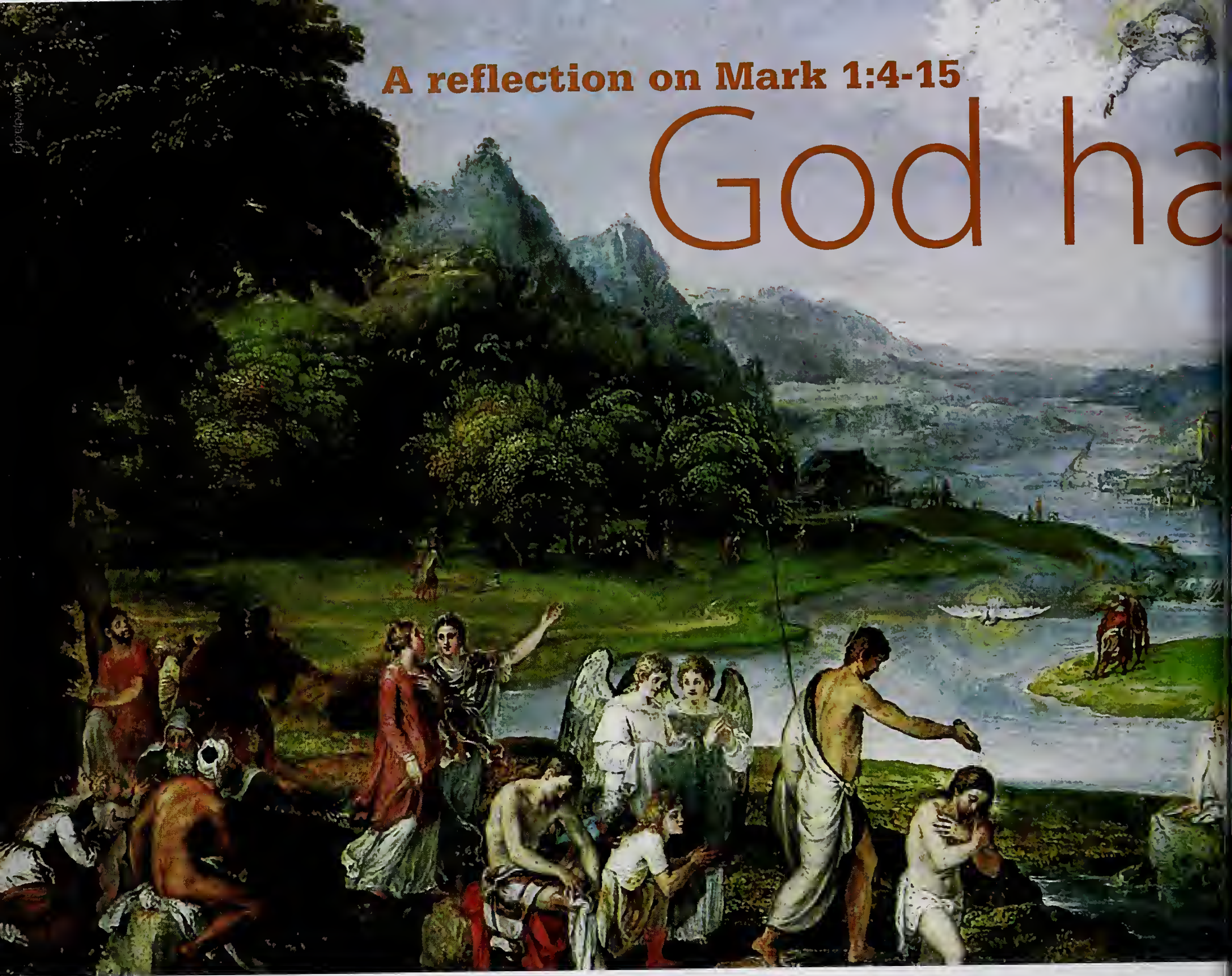
Bob Lupton is president of FCS (Family Consultation Service) Urban Ministries, based in Atlanta. This article is reprinted from the January-February issue of The Marketplace.

A church in Mexico was painted six times one summer by six different missions groups.

Dreamstime.com

A reflection on Mark 1:4-15

God ha



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Baptism of Christ, 1591, Lambert Sustris

The Gospel of Mark doesn't begin with stories of Jesus' birth. There are no angels or shepherds or wise men in his telling of the good news. Instead Mark starts with John the Baptist. And with lots of folks who are searching for something more, something different, something that will bring them close again to God.

Listen again to these words from Mark 1: "John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins."

We're willing to try just about anything, especially if everybody else is doing it.

I hear these words and think of us today here in the United States: we who are heavily influenced and formed by popular culture, we who are searching, always, in the middle of our busy lives for deeper connections and more meaning. Like the people of Judea and Jerusalem, we, too, know that things are not right. We don't feel close to God. We don't feel close to each other. We are not happy with who we have become. We need something more, something different. What can we do? Where can we turn? Do you have the answer? What works for you? We're willing to try just about anything, especially if everybody else is doing it. We don't want to be left out of something that just might be what we need to make us feel good and whole again.

I can imagine us, too, going along with the crowd. Raising our hands. Confessing our sins. Being dunked into the river when it is our turn. Hoping, hoping, hoping that in some way this act of turning and reorienting ourselves will help us feel connected to God again.

John tells those who are coming to confess and be baptized, that there really is something bigger and better on the way: "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me," he says. "I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will

s come near

by Betsy Headrick McCrae

baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In the ancient Middle Eastern culture of Jesus' time, and in many Eastern cultures still today, feet were and are considered the lowliest parts of the body. And sandals or shoes, which come into contact with dust, dirt and debris, are lowlier still. When Bruce and I went to live in Southeast Asia we were told that in certain cultures—in Laos, Thailand and Cambodia, for instance—it would be considered rude if we allowed the bottoms of our feet to point toward another person. We learned to be careful about the position of our feet as we sat on the floor to eat or drink tea. And this feeling about feet and shoes was what was behind the incident in Iraq when an Iraqi reporter threw his shoes at President Bush during a news conference. One news source explained: "Throwing a shoe at someone is considered the worst possible insult in Iraq and is meant to show extreme disrespect and contempt." They gave an example: "When U.S. forces helped topple a statue of Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein, jubilant Iraqis beat the statue's face with their shoes."

When John the Baptist proclaims that he is not worthy even to stoop down and untie Jesus' sandals, he is saying something profound about who Jesus is. He is saying that the one who is to come is worthy of great honor and respect. But he is also setting the stage for an upheaval of cosmic proportions. This Jesus whom John the Baptist rightly puts on a pedestal refuses to stay there. This powerful bearer of the Holy Spirit will not allow human systems of honor and shame to define who his is or how he will relate to people. In Luke's Gospel we are told that Jesus not only allows his dirty feet to be washed and kissed and perfumed by a woman of bad reputation but he holds this woman who touched his feet up as an example to all who aspire to true worship. And he is willing to touch the feet of others. We know from the Gospel of John that after the Last Supper Jesus bent down and washed the feet of his disciples, sending them out to do the same for others. God will not be kept at arms' length because of social mores, Jesus seems to be saying to the disciples and to us. And neither will you. As God's people you are called to be in the midst of whatever is happening with little regard for whether it is considered dirty or clean, lowly or worthy of high respect. No person, including ourselves, is too sinful or too arrogant or too worried or too insignificant for God.

God's purpose in Jesus is to eliminate the barriers that keep humankind from accessing God's love.

Jesus was and is one of us in all the ways that we are human. We see this illustrated again in verse 9: "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan." Jesus was part of the crowd going out to John to be baptized. He did what the crowd did. He went through the whole experience just like everyone else. He was no different from anyone else in that time and place. But at the same time, for him this baptism was something completely different. "As Jesus was coming up out of the water," Mark writes, "he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice

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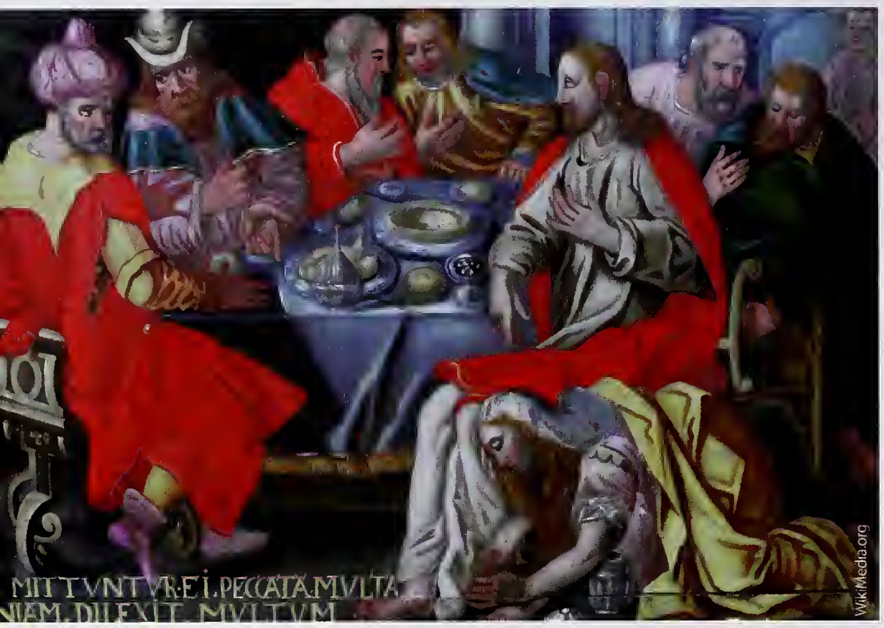


Anointing of Jesus, 17th-century high altar painting, Ballum church, Netherlands

Continued from page 15

came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'" For Jesus this simple act of baptism along with the crowd turns out to be his anointing for ministry. It is the affirmation that he is on the path with God. And it is the first step on his way to the cross.

As Jesus is coming up out of the water, he sees the heavens torn apart. The Greek verb used here and translated "torn apart" occurs only one other time in the Gospel of Mark. It also appears in the story at the end of Jesus' ministry. In chapter 15, Jesus hangs on the cross. He has been taunted and derided. He has cried out in agony to God. Then he gives a loud cry and breathes his last.

Jesus follows faithfully, even when it becomes clear that those greater things that God has in mind include suffering, pain and death.

And at that very moment, Mark writes, "the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom." Here's that verb again: The curtain in the temple dividing the holy of holies from the main sanctuary is torn in two. At Jesus' baptism, the heavens are torn open. You can almost hear the ripping sound. In both these cases, the impenetrable becomes penetrable. Areas that have been off-limits are opened up. God's purpose in Jesus from beginning to end is to eliminate the barriers that keep humankind from accessing God's love. God's purpose in Jesus is to let us know that the kingdom is close and that we can enter. All is forgiven. We no longer have to strive to prove ourselves. We no longer have to go through intermediaries to get to God. In Jesus we are shown in no uncertain terms that nothing is blocking our path; we can enter God's kingdom. God has come near to us. We can come near to God.

This is a wonderfully energizing and freeing truth. It is our salvation. But it doesn't necessarily mean easy sailing. In fact, things can get downright difficult. Immediately after Jesus is filled with the Spirit and hearing the voice of God claiming and naming him as pleasing and well loved, God's Spirit drives him out into the wilderness. If you don't believe it, take another look at this passage for yourself. There's no pause between these two things—the heaven-blessed baptism and the forced departure into the wilderness. There's no time for relaxing and basking in the glow of it all. Being filled with the Spirit and recognized by God apparently includes trials and temptations and run-ins with wild beasts. It includes prayer and fasting, suffering and waiting. All this is part of the package. All this is part of being fully human. And all this is part of learning what it means to come closer to God.

The people of Judea and Jerusalem go out into the wilderness looking for something to fill the void in their lives. They feel guilty and long for forgiveness. Like us, they are searching for God. Like us, they want to be made right. Jesus is right there with them and among them. He is the one who is to come, full of power and the Holy Spirit, worthy of glory and honor, yet he is also the one who will bend down and wash his disciples' dirty feet. Jesus is the one who enters the waters of the Jordan River along with everyone else, only to hear the heavens tear open and the voice of God claim him for greater things. And Jesus is the one who follows faithfully, even when it becomes clear that those greater things that God has in mind include suffering, pain and death. Jesus is right there among the searching crowds in Judea and Jerusalem. And Jesus is right here among us now, reminding us over and over again that all is forgiven and that even death isn't powerful enough to claim us. Jesus has walked the path of faithfulness before us and assures us with confidence of what is real and true: There are no barriers between us and the everlasting, steadfast love of God.

"The time is fulfilled," he proclaims as he walks with us through the streets of Galilee, the streets of Denver, the streets of Lakewood and of the world, "the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Sisters and brothers, this is the word of the Lord and it can be trusted.

Betsy Headrick McCrae is pastor of Glennon Heights Mennonite Church in Lakewood, Colo. This article is adapted from a sermon she preached there on Jan. 11.

Strangers become friends

David and Krista meet Israel and Rosario.

by David and Krista Powell

In early 2008, we decided to improve our Spanish-speaking skills and searched for local immigrants with whom we could converse. We asked a person who teaches local ESL classes if she knew a Hispanic immigrant family or couple interested in helping each other learn the other's language. We proposed spending one half hour together each time speaking only Spanish, then another half hour speaking only English.

A few weeks later, we heard from the teacher that a young Mexican couple was excited about this. We called them, and the struggle to communicate began. We tried our Spanish first, which they had a hard time understanding. They tried their English, which we had a hard time understanding. But finally we were able to set a time to meet at our house.

The first time we met was awkward but encouraging. Israel and Rosario were friendly but confessed they were a little scared. They brought a large picture book with Spanish words for us. At the end of the hour, we set another time to get together. We continued to meet weekly or biweekly, as time permitted. Soon Rosario invited us for a meal. We met their son, Joshua. He and our two sons played together.

Thus began the exchange of many meals at each other's homes. Once, they brought a matching card game designed for learning language. We taught them how to play croquet. We learned to laugh at ourselves and each other as we all misused and mispronounced our Spanglish and Englanol. We learned they had few friends here, even though there is a growing Hispanic community in the area. "Everyone comes from different parts of Mexico," they said.

Eventually, they confided in us that they were not here legally. He had a work visa but due to the expense of annual renewal had not renewed it the last time. She had traveled across the Mexico-Texas border, not eating for three days. Our surprise was a result of stereotypes we had, since they were a stable, responsible couple. He had a good job, they had purchased their own mobile home, and she loved to take her son to the library.

In August 2008, Israel learned his mother in Mexico City had cancer and needed treatment. They thought at first he would go back to visit, but they realized they would not be able to reenter due to their immigration status. They contacted an immigration attorney and thought they could reinstate his legal status, but they decided they could wait no longer and left in September 2008 to drive all the way to Mexico City.

When we visited them for the last time, they thanked us for being their friends. Rosario cried, Krista followed suit, then Israel and Dave teared up. We were strangers no more but good friends. We exchanged addresses, telephone numbers and emails. They invited us to visit them in Mexico. Someday, we hope to take them up on that.

Meeting each other on the same level helped make this cross-cultural relationship a lasting friendship. They saw us struggle with their language, just as they struggled with English. Meeting in each other's homes with our children around gave us a taste of the experiences we share as humans. They asked about our church, which led to discussions of faith. Their legal status made no difference to our view of them as friends.

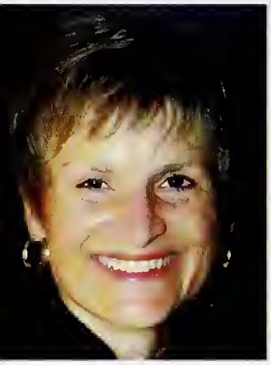
We don't have many answers for governmental immigration policy, but we believe that in reaching out to recent immigrants, mission and peacemaking come together. Many immigrants are lonely in this new land. More small groups in our churches could invite recent immigrants to join them as a way to learn about and help one another.

Hebrews 13:2 says, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Christ's desire is that all be drawn closer to him and to each other. By welcoming the stranger in the land, we work for Christlike justice and peace among God's children.

Dave and Krista Powell are members of Springdale Mennonite Church in Waynesboro, Va.

Meeting each other on the same level helped make this cross-cultural relationship a lasting friendship.

What's right with Mennonite Church USA



Sharon Waltner is moderator of Mennonite Church USA.

We live in a difficult world. Fear and scarcity are frequent themes in the media, and some of us are experiencing uncertain and challenging times.

And yet as a church—in our congregations, our conferences and the broader denomination—we have unparalleled opportunities for God's healing and hope to flow through us to the world.

Can we celebrate these opportunities? Can we celebrate the places in our lives where we are responding positively to God's call? Celebrating what is right can empower us and unleash our energy and creativity.

There are many things to celebrate within Mennonite Church USA. New racial-ethnic congregations are beginning to find the support and resources they need within our denomination. (Recently, almost 50 first-generation Asian, Latin American and African church leaders met together with denominational leaders for this purpose, but that is another story.)

We need to celebrate what's right and set our energy free to address what's wrong.

In my own conference, Central Plains, our community network developer, Mark Van Steenwyk, is making contacts with intentional communities and emerging congregations across the country and putting them in touch with Mennonites. Others outside our tradition are finding Anabaptists for the first time and embracing this theology with passion.

Opportunities are flowing in your conference, too. One conference leader recently said she is seeing more church-planting activity within our conferences and among our congregations than she has ever seen before.

Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Central Committee report a significant increase in youth applications for voluntary service opportunities. Many of these youth are not Mennonites from our traditional congregations.

Established congregations are embracing a new missional church vision. Terry Shue, pastor of Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church and a member of our Executive Board, has mentored 15 people from within his congregation for pastoral ministry in the last eight years. Nine are now in seminary or have already been in full time Christian ministry assignments.

I hear repeatedly from others outside our Anabaptist circles, "Cherish your treasure; share your treasure with others. Your rooted Anabaptist theology is what the world desperately needs now." How encouraging and empowering!

Our God is a God of extravagant abundance and our challenge is to take advantage of the opportunities God has given us. With God's help, we can respond to God's call with exigency, releasing our preconceived ideas of how church is "supposed to be" and opening ourselves to the hospitality of others.

We have a responsibility to recognize the things within Mennonite Church USA that are going well. What is happening within your congregation and conference that needs to be celebrated? Celebrating what's right helps us learn how to respond to obstacles and keeps us striving toward our vision of healing and hope.

Dewitt Jones, a photographer for *National Geographic*, says that "by celebrating what's right, we find the energy to fix what's wrong." When we acknowledge the positive activities in our church, we realize that solutions are possible and that challenges can be overcome.

I'm not a Pollyanna. There are challenges we need to face. We need to learn to follow our vision with joy and passion, capture the creativity of our youth and overcome our complacency and comfort that can numb us from hearing God's call clearly.

Sometimes we seem to be more interested in arguing about issues that can divide us than in joining together in what God is doing in the world. But looking only at where we are failing can be unproductive. We need to celebrate what's right and set our energy free to address what's wrong.

As moderator of Mennonite Church USA these past two years, I've had a wonderful opportunity to meet with people all over the country and to hear their stories of inspiration and joy. You are intentionally seeking where God is working and you are actively engaged in meeting needs in our challenging world.

When we learn how to embrace a celebratory attitude of joy and thanksgiving within Mennonite Church USA, we can better serve those around us. Our church is a treasure. May we learn to celebrate this abundant gift and with urgency and exuberance, find new ways to join in God's efforts.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Co-workers**—Eleanor Beachy
- **True evangelical faith**—Ted Lewis

Danzig church books return to Poland

The four books are among the oldest Mennonite church records in existence.

Four record books from a defunct Prussian Mennonite congregation that have been housed in the Mennonite Library and Archives on the Bethel College campus in North Newton, Kan., for more than six decades are being prepared to return to Europe this summer, helping close a circle that encompasses nearly all of Mennonite-Anabaptist history.

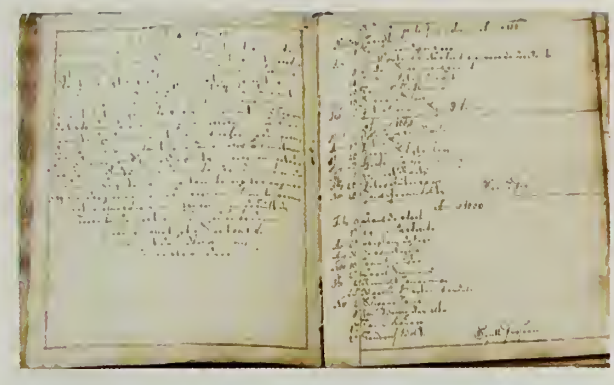
The books, among the oldest Mennonite church records in existence, are from Danzig in West Prussia (now Gdansk, Poland), where Dutch adherents to the fledgling Anabaptist movement had begun settling by the 1530s.

Dirk Philips, an important 16th-century Anabaptist leader, is considered the founder of the Danzig Mennonite Church, and Menno Simons likely visited the group, though before it was a formally organized congregation. It soon became large—well over 1,000 members—and influential, distinguished by its size and its urban location when most of the Mennonite congregations were small and rural.

"Given Danzig Mennonite Church's size and prominence, many Low Germans in the world, from Paraguay to Canada to Germany, can trace some connection to the congregation," says Rich Preheim, director of the Historical Committee for Mennonite Church USA, under whose auspices the archives at both Bethel College and Goshen (Ind.) College fall. "It was Danzig Church members who led the migration to Ukraine and the establishment of the first Russian Mennonite colony at Chortitza [in 1789]."

Four centuries of Mennonite presence in West Prussia came to end at the close of World War II, when the region's Mennonites—who identified themselves as German—scattered in the face of the advancing Soviet army. Those refugees spirited out many of the surviving West Prussian congregational materials, much of which has now made its way into the collection of the Mennonitische Forschungsstelle, the Mennonite archives at Weierhof, Germany—with some exceptions, including the four record books from the Danzig Mennonite Church.

Oral tradition says that Mennonite historians Cornelius Krahn and Harold S. Bender instructed American Mennonite relief workers who went to Europe after World War II to be on the lookout for items of possible historical significance. Visiting the bomb-damaged Danzig Mennonite Church, one of those workers—there is no definitive record of who—found congregational records either in the building or in the possession of a neighbor. "There was no place in Europe at that time for the Danzig books to go," says Preheim.



David Fast

One of four congregational record books from the Danzig Mennonite Church.

In the last several years, informal conversation began about putting the books in the Mennonitische Forschungsstelle, where the bulk of West Prussian Mennonite materials reside, with more serious planning taking place in the past two years. In preparation for the transfer, Preheim has been raising funds to pay for digitizing all four volumes and placing them on the Historical Committee's Web site. The oldest of the four books is in fairly good shape but the other three have pages burned on the edges and bindings that have disintegrated.

Very restricted handling is necessary in order to limit further deterioration, Preheim says. Digitizing will help by making it possible to look at the text without actually handling the books. A North Manchester, Ind., firm with expertise in digitizing old, fragile documents recently completed the job.

"We can't go back and recreate Danzig Mennonite Church or the West Prussian Mennonite presence," he says, "but we can honor and preserve that legacy by preserving these books and making them accessible.

"We're deeply grateful [the books] were found, that someone had the knowledge and perspective to keep an eye open for them," he says. "There's much to be learned about faithfulness, identity and perspective from the experience of the Danzig Mennonite Church and the West Prussian Mennonites."

Transporting such fragile documents is neither simple nor inexpensive, but Preheim hopes at least to have a Historical Committee representative symbolically hand over the books to the Mennonitische Forschungsstelle at the meeting of the Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein (German Mennonite Historical Association), which oversees the archives, in Berlin at the end of June.
—Melanie Zuercher for Mennonite Church USA

We can't go back and recreate Danzig Mennonite Church … but we can honor and preserve that legacy by preserving these books and making them accessible.—Rich Preheim

Waltner completes her two-year term as Mennonite Church USA moderator

Jeremy Waltner/KALEIDSCOPE

In addition to her work as a health-care educator, Mennonite Church USA moderator Sharon Waltner farms with her husband, Keith, near Parker, S.D. Adolph, the family's friendly Rottweiler, is her constant companion on the farm.

The moderator of Mennonite Church USA has many tasks, but this leader's last week of service is the most public: moderating the biennial Delegate Assembly. Sharon Waltner will be doing that June 30-July 5, during Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 in Columbus, Ohio. To mark the end of her two-year tenure, I interviewed Waltner by email.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Editor: During your biennium as moderator, Mennonite Church USA evaluated the denominational structure put in place in 2001. As a result of this Six-Year Review, will there be significant changes to Mennonite Church USA?

I trust Mennonite Church USA will stand unwaveringly on issues that are central to following Jesus within the framework of our Anabaptist theology. Of course, a dynamic, missional church will indeed make changes to join in God's efforts. Three specific areas of significant change that have resulted from our review are these:

- The first annual all boards meeting: This biennium was the first time all board members from our agency and constituency groups met together face-to-face at round tables. Meeting together is the first step toward building trust within our denomination. This meeting provided an opportunity to worship together, share our passions about our various missions and learn how to better collaborate as we seek to fulfill the mission and vision of Mennonite Church USA.
- Revitalization of our stated vision: A Vision of Healing and Hope. During this biennium, it became clear to me that our Healing and Hope vision statement captures the energy and identity of our constituency. God calls us to be agents of healing and hope in this world, and we as Mennonite Church USA continue to strive to meet this daunting yet crucial mandate.
- Empowerment of Governance Council: The Governance Council, composed of our agency directors and board chairs, has reached a new level of trust and, consequently, a new level of efficiency. The agency executives are meeting regularly with the executive director of Mennonite Church USA as well. I sense a deepened commitment to work together in innovative ways to reduce redundancy and to streamline efforts and resources.

In March 2008, the Executive Board under your leadership said that our denomination's vision and call "is not adequately supported by our current relationships, behaviors and organization." Have there been significant changes in relationships, behaviors and organization in the past year?

Yes. Some specific examples of these changes are these:

- Agency directors and our executive staff are not only meeting together regularly but planning together and setting goals for our churchwide work. Previously this group only met sporadically.
- Under Marty Lehman's leadership, many communications and development functions are being reviewed and addressed from a shared, churchwide point of view to determine where we have duplication and how we can better share resources.
- We agreed to hire a consultant for better alignment of churchwide operations. Our goal is to present recommendations for change from an objective, impartial process of listening and discernment.
- The Executive Director search is driven by a desire for the whole church to be consulted and involved. We've expended significant effort to gain input from minority groups, emerging fellowships and traditional congregations.

In June 2008, the Executive Board announced its plan to form one board to lead all Mennonite Church USA agencies. But that

Note: In the July 7 issue we will have a similar feature on Ed Diller, Mennonite Church USA moderator for the 2009-2011 biennium.

South Dakota farmer and health-care educator reflects on Mennonite Church USA's changes to 'current relationships, behaviors and organization.'

plan is now on hold and appears unlikely to become reality. As you reflect on 2008, would you do anything differently with regard to this proposal and the way the Executive Board led the discussion?

Hindsight always offers new insights. I regret the confusion and frustration encountered as we proposed the Executive Board initiatives. The initiative to form one board is under continued discernment. Although some segments of the original initiatives may not be implemented, the proposals were critical to facilitate needed change. Much progress has come as a result of the initiatives. Mennonite Church USA is a treasure. To effectively share this treasure, we need to be both prudent and nimble with our resources.

What are the things about Mennonite Church USA that give you the most hope?

My belief in and hope for the vision of Mennonite Church USA is renewed through each phone conference, face-to-face meeting and discernment process we engage in. I'm continually reminded that God's plan is so much broader and richer than any of us can fathom. A few reasons to celebrate:

- Others outside our traditional circles are finding Anabaptism for the first time, and their enthusiasm and fervor is contagious.
- New racial-ethnic congregations are finding more support and resources within Mennonite Church USA.
- We observe our traditional congregations finding new energy and creativity as they embrace the missional church vision.

This past biennium has been an extraordinary opportunity for me to experience the commitment and passion of our diverse constituency as it seeks to join in God's work. For me, this is the quintessence of hope.

What are the things about Mennonite Church USA that give you the most concern?

Though I firmly believe that Mennonite Church USA is on the right path, it's important for us to keep ourselves open to new directions God may take us. May we choose with urgency to be proactive rather than reactive. That said, three areas we must address are these:

- Our capacity to clearly hear God's voice is curtailed as we become too comfortable in our busy and overcommitted lifestyles. Often the dominant culture insidiously pervades our worldview and champions complacency.
- Many of our young adults are choosing to leave the church or are not finding meaningful congregations in the cities where they move.
- Often we appear more interested in arguing about peripheral issues such as homosexuality, worship music styles, health-care priorities, etc. and are less interested in responding together to God's call for us to become a growing, faithful and effective church.

Often we appear more interested in arguing about peripheral issues ... and are less interested in responding together to God's call.

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EW HOLLAND

Jeremy Waltner/KALEIDSCOPE

Mennonite Church USA moderator Sharon Waltner is a health-care educator and farms with her husband Keith near Parker, S.D. This includes cleaning out cattle lots.

Former MVSer trades tools for wheels

Ryan Iafigliola will lead bike trip to promote Fuller Center for Housing.

Cara Rufenacht

WWW. FU ER C NTER BIKE TRIP .COM
raise
FULLER CENTER

Former MVSer Ryan Iafigliola with fellow rider Katherine Stump

This summer, using bicycles, water bottles and helmets as their tools, 18 riders will travel from Michigan to Florida to help raise houses.

From July 10 to Aug. 16, these bikers, led by former Mennonite Voluntary Service participant Ryan Iafigliola, will travel from city to city, spreading the word about the Fuller Center for Housing and raising money to supplement building projects.

> The bike ride changed my whole perspective. I had never considered working for a nonprofit before, but I felt God calling me to do something.
> —Katherine Stump

The bike ride will also honor Millard Fuller, the founder of both Habitat for Humanity and the Fuller Center for Housing, who died unexpectedly after a brief illness in February.

Begun in 2005, the Fuller Center for Housing continues Fuller's legacy of making decent housing available to all people. The Fuller Center focuses its efforts on helping provide upkeep and renovations to existing homes. Instead of simply building new homes, they can fit homes with handicap accessible features like ramps and handrails, put on new roofs and help with a variety of other repairs.

"Millard began to notice there was a target audience that Habitat couldn't serve," says Iafigliola. "For example, elderly people who are living in a home but don't have the resources for upkeep. Now people can be blessed by receiving repairs and then help send back a gift that can bless someone else."

Iafigliola first got involved with Habitat and Fuller during his time as a student at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind. He knew he was interested in working alongside Fuller after college, and MVS provided a program that allowed him to serve with the Fuller Center for a year as a volunteer. Mennonite Voluntary Service, one of Mennonite Mission Network's Christian Service programs, invites adults of all ages and backgrounds to spend a one- or two-year term living in community and serving in a variety of locations across the United States.

During his volunteer year, Iafigliola was encouraged to develop his own gifts as a leader and came up with the idea of a bike ride to raise awareness and funds for the Fuller Center. He modeled his idea on walks across the country that Fuller hosted during the 1980s and 1990s.

Last summer, eight riders joined Iafigliola in a coast-to-coast bike ride from San Diego, Calif., to Savannah, Ga., and raised $135,000 for the Fuller Center. This year the goal is to raise $200,000, and Iafigliola is still looking for more riders, for a day or for the entire trip, to help meet this goal.

Last year, one biker, Katherine Stump, found the ride on Facebook, an online social networking site. She was so inspired by the mission of the Fuller Center that when the bikers rode through Americus, Ga., where the Fuller Center is located, she submitted an application and interviewed for a job. She now serves as the assistant director of communications for the Fuller Center.

"The bike ride changed my whole perspective. I had never considered working for a nonprofit before, but for the first time in my life I felt God calling me to do something," says Stump.

During the 2009 bike ride, bikers will stay at churches and connect with Fuller Center partners in different cities. On July 12 in South Bend, Fuller Center board chair LeRoy Troyer is organizing a building event at which riders will help renovate a house alongside people from the community. Bikers will also stay at Kern Road Mennonite Church in South Bend and have a chance to share with church members about their ride. Members of the congregation will also join the bikers for the first day's journey.

"In our county, we're working on a program to eliminate substandard housing," says Troyer. "The Bible says that with God all things are possible, and we're claiming that. It's exciting to see young people like Ryan getting involved." After completing his year with MVS, Iafigliola continues to work at the Fuller Center as a staff member.

Individuals are invited to join the Fuller Center bikers for any length of time during the ride. For more information about the Fuller Center bike adventure, visit www.fullercenterbiketrip.com. *—Hannah Heinzekehr of Mennonite Mission Network*

New Kenyan church works at tribal peace

Fifty attend reconciliation meeting at Chepilat Mennonite Outreach Church.

Last spring, the charred remains of homes and businesses lined the streets of Chepilat, Kenya, a town in the borderlands west of Nairobi, where the Kalengin and Kisi tribes rub up against one another.

For years they had lived in peace, but following the uncertainties of the disputed 2008 election, the friction burst into flames, leaving death, destruction and hatred in its wake.

"But God still works miracles," says Lois Boyer, an Eastern Mennonite Mission (EMM) worker in the country.

Last December, four young men on a Youth Evangelism Service team—Colin Good, Stefan Wessman, Brook Musselman and Taylor Weidman—came to live in Chepilat to help lay the groundwork for a possible reconciliation meeting.

For five months the YES team worked alongside Kenyan Mennonite church planter George Nyahude to plant the Chepilat Mennonite Outreach Church and befriend church leaders from both sides of the conflict.

"Our thought was that if the church was not united across tribal boundaries, we couldn't expect others to be," says Wessman.

As they built relationships in the town, the YES team met separately with pastors from both sides to discuss past events and what would lead to peace and reconciliation.

After tea, conversation and intertribal relationship building, the team invited all area pastors to a meeting on March 30. About 50 people attended.

Pastor George moderated the meeting and introduced Clair Good, the EMM Africa representative. Using Romans 12:11-21 as a backdrop, Good told stories of injustice and forgiveness, then paired off the group, trying to mix up the different tribes.

Good invited the pairs to share with one another what they thought the Scripture was saying. Then when the group reassembled, people shared what they heard their partners saying.

"The Holy Spirit was definitely in those conversations," Wessman says. "It was an open time of honest sharing about the uprising. People took responsibility for their own sins, listened to each other and to God. By the time we broke for lunch, there was tangible excitement in the air. Something was going to happen."

After the discussion, Mennonite bishop Clyde Agola spoke along with Pastor Kennedy from the National Council of Churches of Kenya. Both expressed the need for peace and unity among Christian leaders.

Photo provided

On left, Aram DiGennaro, EMM worker in Kenya, chats with Chepilat pastors over lunch at the day-long reconciliation meeting hosted by the Chepilat Mennonite Outreach Church.

Before the day ended, the group decided to form the Chepilat Interdenominational Peace and Reconciliation Organization—a pastors' fellowship that will continue working for peace and reconciliation.

"We knew God had moved in a big way to bring all these men from hostile sides together to work for peace," Wessman says. "It was just incredible."

The reconciliation meeting has also had a profound impact on the young church plant.

"We've seen the light of God in our church here," Wessman says. "The following Sunday we had one of the best services I've ever been part of. It seemed God was smiling down and saying 'just wait, you haven't seen anything yet.'

"We were filled with joy and excitement as people crammed the sanctuary. The energy was contagious. Energy built as the service progressed. Before, during and after each introduction the enthusiastic church members clapped, shouted, cheered and praised God just for bringing them to the service regardless of their tribal backgrounds."

The YES team was especially encouraged to see many familiar faces—people they'd learned to know while visiting in the town, teaching English in the local elementary school, working with the church youth group and playing soccer.

"We didn't have any special training in peacemaking," says YES team member Brook Musselman. "All we did was call people together and share our passion for peace. It felt like Luke 10, where Jesus sent out the 72. They didn't have much special training either. But their relationship with Jesus was enough."—*Jewel Showalter of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

Holy Spirit will be with them, grads told

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary graduating class small but 'mighty.'

Mary Klassen

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary graduates sing at the May 23 commencement.

Taking a cue from the church calendar, which showed eight days until Pentecost, Dorothy Nickel Friesen told Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., graduates that the Holy Spirit—the Advocate, the Paraclete—will be with them in their ministry. The John 15:9-17 passage that Friesen used as the basis for her message at the seminary's commencement service on May 23 comes within a section in which Jesus is preparing his disciples for his death. The disciples are asking, "Where are you going? Can we go, too? Who will stay with us?"

Friesen noted that as graduates leave the seminary and move into ministry, they, too, are asking, "Who will stay with us?"

"Each day of ministry, you will call out for the Advocate," the conference minister for Western District Conference said. She reassured them that as they make hospital visits, wait with grooms as weddings begin and do other ministry tasks, the Holy Spirit will be with them.

Friesen noted a variety of ministry concerns highlighted in publications for church leaders, including economic stress, addictions and the need for the church to involve young people. However, she also noted the signs she sees of new vitality in the church.

"I see small group prayer cells, community gardens and barriers between people slowly giving way and allowing new conversations." She concluded with the reminder that Jesus called his followers "friends," and added, "God has called you to be salt and light, to be present. God calls you to love one another and bear fruit."

Rebecca Slough, AMBS academic dean, called the 2009 graduating class small but "mighty," explaining that some students who could have graduated this year decided to continue their studies another year.

Of the 15 students who graduated in the service at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., seven received the Master of Divinity degree, three the Master of Arts: Theological Studies, two the Master of Arts: Peace Studies, two the Master of Arts in Mission and Evangelism, and one the certificate in Theological Studies.

Seven graduates will begin or continue pastoral ministry assignments, and one is seeking a pastoral ministry placement. Four will pursue further studies, one will work with Mennonite Church USA, one will continue work with Mennonite.net, and one will pursue peace and justice work. One graduate is from Kenya and will return to the congregation where he previously served as pastor. Two graduates are from Canada and the remaining 12 are from the United States.

Friesen is conference minister for Western District Conference.—*Mary E. Klassen of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary*

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Graduates challenged to 'cultivate caring'

One-hundred nineteen students graduate from Bethel College on May 24.

Mark McCormick, commencement speaker for Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., tackled what seems the looming issue for the class of 2009 in the United States: the economy.

But the career journalist deliberately gave his address a title—"The Caring Economy"—that could be read several ways, and he treated the topic with a twist that seemed to resonate with his audience. McCormick was speaking to the 116th graduating class of Bethel College on May 24, with ceremonies taking place for the second year in a row outdoors in Thresher Stadium.

This year a new ritual was added to commencement: touching a threshing stone, the same one freshmen touch as they are welcomed to campus at the first convocation.

Until earlier this year, McCormick worked for *The Wichita Eagle*, for which he had written a weekly column since 2004. He was recently named executive director of the Kansas African-American Museum in Wichita.

"I'm talking about the economy in terms of everything we spend—time, money, energy," McCormick said. "How we do that reflects our priorities and our values.

"A caring economy," McCormick said, "supports and promotes capitalism and also conscience. It stops opening more liquor stores in neighborhoods where violence is on the rise. It puts a check on predatory lenders and credit card companies. It provides health care for all those who are sick."

McCormick said he is an example of the current economic downturn. Several months ago, he learned that his position at *The Wichita Eagle* was being reduced to half-time and that ultimately it would not survive budget cuts.

"I felt like a failure," he said. "Then I learned that although I was a victim of an uncaring economy, people did care."

A lesson he learned from reading author Mitch Albom, McCormick said, is that "relationships are the most important, not money or possessions. A caring economy is based on relationships."

"The world needs you," he said to the graduates. "The city needs you. A friend needs you. No matter what your major or your training—the abandoned child and the mother who abandoned him need you to cultivate caring. That is broader than investments and portfolios and vaster than the Federal Reserve."

As they crossed the stage to receive their diplomas, several students expressed their appreciation to McCormick for his remarks.

Vada Snider

Amber Goossen, left, and Cane Griffiths, touch the threshing stone before Bethel College's 116th commencement exercises.

Bethel president Barry Bartel conferred 40 bachelor of arts and 79 bachelor of science degrees. Fifty-three of the graduates plan to enter health- and social service-related careers, 15 business and seven education. At least four will follow a Bethel tradition of taking voluntary service assignments.—*Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*

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Hope for those affected by violence, AIDS

MCC helps fund day-care center in South Africa, peace workshops in India.

Joanna Hiebert Bergen

Children play table games at Bophelong day-care center in Thembisa township, South Africa.

In the South African language of Southern Sotho, Bophelong means "the place of life." It is a fitting name for a bright day-care center full of smiling children in Thembisa township, near Johannesburg, South Africa.

But many of the children at Bophelong have lost one or both parents to AIDS and are being cared for by either a grandmother or by siblings not much older than themselves. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is providing financial support to the day-care center to ensure that the children have a loving, adult presence in their lives.

"The walls are full of posters, numbers, letters and pictures," says Joanna Hiebert Bergen, MCC's HIV/AIDS coordinator, who visited the center earlier this year. "It is a day-care center where children are given opportunity to learn, to grow and to thrive."

Hiebert Bergen also traveled to Ethiopia, Tanzania and South Africa to visit a variety of organizations that MCC supports in helping people affected by HIV and AIDS.

In many places, the effects are devastating. The disease often strikes people in the prime of life, between the ages of 20 and 40. When parents are too sick to work, children often cannot afford to attend school and are left to beg or work in menial jobs.

In South Africa alone, 1.4 million children have lost at least one parent to AIDS. Organizations such as Bophelong play a key role in supporting them.

"These children would go hungry if not for the nutritious meals and snacks provided by the day-care center," says Hiebert Bergen. MCC provides financial support or personnel to 69 organizations responding to HIV and AIDS in more than 25 countries around the world. These organizations provide care for adults and children with HIV and their families, teach communities how to prevent the disease and advocate for people affected by it.

Information about MCC's response to HIV and AIDS, including ways to help, is available at mcc.org/aids.—*Amanda Thorsteinsson for Mennonite Central Committee*

Hope for peace in India

Christians in India's Orissa state regard the outcome of April and May general elections as an answer to prayer, according to the Rev. Dr. Bijoy K. Roul, South Asia administrator for the Brethren in Christ Church. Orissa's Christian minority was the target of widespread attacks in late August 2008, and many Christians blame radical Hindu groups for inciting the violence. The elections gave more national parliamentary seats to India's governing Congress Party, which is secular, and fewer seats to the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is associated with Hindu nationalism.

MCC is promoting peace in Orissa by sponsoring workshops on peace and reconciliation and helping local leaders receive specialized training in these areas. MCC is planning to sponsor two Brethren in Christ church leaders from Orissa to attend Henry Martyn Institute, a school of interfaith relations in the Indian city of Hyderabad. Along with other Christian groups, the Brethren in Christ were directly affected by the violence, with homes and church properties burned.

Orissa's Brethren in Christ churches are planning to organize a peacemaking dialogue with Christians, Hindus and political leaders this year. Roul is cautiously optimistic about the prospects for peace in Orissa. In the run-up to the elections, the state's governing party broke off an alliance with the BJP and promised to improve security for Christians, such as those who fled their homes during the 2008 violence.

"There are still some people living in the forest area in camps," Roul says. "It will take some more time" for them to return. On a broader scale, Mennonites and Brethren in Christ throughout India are organizing peace committees to ease tensions. MCC is providing financial support to this effort, which is organized by Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India.—*Tim Shenk of Mennonite Central Committee*

CALENDAR

The **Orrville Mennonite Church, Orrville, Ohio,** is having its ***centennial celebration*** June 27-28. For a weekend schedule of events log on to the Web site at www.orrvillemenno.net.

WORKERS

Hunsberger, Willis, was licensed as pastor of Concord Mennonite Church in Knoxville, Tenn., on May 24.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Bogle, Samuel Jonah, March 24, to Michael and Celesti Buller Bogle, Windom, Minn.

Boyd, Zachary Curtis, May 22, to Bill and Katie Friesen Boyd, Lincoln, Neb.

Fox, Xander Lewis, May 15, to Shane and Treva Falk Fox, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Friesen, Adrik Hayes, May 27, to Gibbon and Brooke Thieszen Friesen, Henderson, Neb.

Green, Amelia Elizabeth, May 25, to Sam and Laura Green, New Paris, Ind.

Groenewold, Seth David, May 3, to Steve and Kara Bailey Groenewold, Riverside, Iowa.

Langenderfer, Margaret Mae, April 21, to Larry and Kim Smith Langenderfer, Archbold, Ohio.

Lebow, Grant Wayne, Jan. 12, to Ryan and Bobbie Siebert Lebow, Lincoln, Neb.

Martin, Eleni Iris, May 13, to Chad Martin and Jessica King, Lancaster, Pa.

Mayer, Jace Travis, May 27, to Eric and Jenny Mast Mayer, Sarasota, Fla.

McCullough, Harper Reese, May 13, to Jamie and Melissa Troyer McCullough, Beaver Crossing, Neb.

Miller, Brylee Elizabeth, May 12, to Zac and Angela Wessley Miller, Newton, Kan.

Peters, Ellery Kate, April 14, Luke and Chasie Young Peters, Henderson, Neb.

Popp, Adam Joseph, May 15, Steve and Tonya Short Popp, Denver, Colo.

Regier, Maddox Levi, May 11, to Andrew and Valerie Ediger Regier, York, Neb.

Ressler, Elijah Alan, May 27, to Derek and Sarah Barth Ressler, South Bend, Ind.

Sweeney, Jaxson Leo, May 9, to Andrew and Andi Huebert Sweeney, Henderson, Neb.

Vap, VaNessa Ann, Feb. 6, to Jesse and Laura Epp Vap, Henderson, Neb.

Witthoft, Ruth Elizabeth, April 28, to Brandon and Lori Miller Witthoft, Wellman, Iowa.

Yoder, Marie Ella, April 17, to Vince and Gretchen Brenneman Yoder, Kalona, Iowa.

Yost, Samantha Galzote, May 16, to Casey and Janet Galzote Schertz Yoder, San Francisco, Calif.

MARRIAGES

Bloomer/Nafziger: Kristen Bloomer, Archbold, Ohio, and Gary Nafziger, Archbold, May 9, at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Chapman/Karina: Jeremy Chapman, South Bend, Ind., and Myra Karina, South Bend, May 9, at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend.

Detweiler Wiens/Smith: Mary Lee Detweiler Wiens, Hesston, Kan., and Jim Smith, Hesston, May 30, at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Enns/Lungal: Cael James Enns, Altona, Man., and Brittani Lungal, Gretna, Man., May 2 at Buffalo Point, Manitoba.

Epp/Frogge: Sheldon Epp, Henderson, Neb., and Lauricia Frogge, Aurora, Neb., May 16, at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

"For the Record" is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. To submit information, log on to www.TheMennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access our online forms. You can also submit information by email, fax or mail:

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Hernandez/Springer: Yaneth Hernandez, Goshen, Ind., and Mark Springer, Goshen, May 30, at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Hershey/Mercer: Pam Hershey, Columbiana, Ohio, and Paul Mercer, Columbiana, May 23, at Leetonia Mennonite Church, Leetonia, Ohio.

Liechty/Martin: Jenna Liechty, Goshen, Ind., and Peter Martin, Berne, Ind., April 25, at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

DEATHS

Bechtel, Lowell, 90, Goshen, Ind., died May 15. Spouse: Sarah "Betty" Whirledge Bechtel (deceased). Parents: Ira and Rosa Rensberger. Children: Jane Troup, Thomas, Edward; six grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. May 18 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Bender, Paul E., 83, Belleville, Pa., died May 13. Spouse: Leona Miller Bender. Parents: Lewis and Barbara Miller Bender. Children: Lois A. Arnold, John Paul, L. Roy, Titus W., Miriam D. Ferguson, Loren E., Kevin Ray; 14 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 18 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

Burkholder, Gertrude Evelyn Martin, 82, Waynesboro, Va., died May 22. Spouse: Merlin A. Burkholder. Parents: William H. and Florence Hershey Martin. Children: Eddie, Robert, Perry, Philip, Cindy Houff, Sara Showalter, Jay, Wendell M; 22 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 25 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro.

Dyer, Shirley Pankratz, 66, Henderson, Neb., died Jan. 1. Spouse: Jim Dyer. Parents: Oliver and Susie Friesen Pankratz. Children: Rick, Teri Walker, Tammie Maaske, Tricia Sander; 10 grandchildren; three step-grandchildren; four step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 5 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Enns, Peter H., 81, Altona, Manitoba, died April 29. Spouse: Helen Enns. Parents: Abram S. and Helena Heinrichs Enns. Children: Myrla Friesen, Angela Friesen; seven grandchildren. Funeral: May 2 at Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Manitoba.

Franz, George F., 83, Henderson, Neb., died April 30. Spouse: Cleola Pankratz Franz. Parents: George G. and Marie Epp Franz. Children: Greg, Kathy Ripley; stepchildren: Verlene Garber, LaVerne Epp, Dr. Galen Epp; four grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 5 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Friesen, Marie Friesen, 95, Henderson, Neb., died April 11. Spouse: John T. Friesen (deceased). Parents: Gerhard E. and Katharina Huebert Friesen. Children: Rubena Hiebner, Myrna Johnson, Mary Claassen, Donald, Amanda Rempel, Melvin, LaVerne; 20 grandchildren; 32 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 15 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Klassen, Selma Strausz, 94, Schowalter Villa, Hesston, Kan., died April 7. Spouse: Rudolph "R. A." Klassen (deceased). Parents: Peter J. and Anna Flickner Strausz. Children: Donald, James, Vernell Miller, Cynthia Goerzen; eight grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 10 at Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel.

King, Dorothy M. Hartzler, 98, West Liberty, Ohio, died May 21 of complications from surgery. Spouse: Loren King (deceased). Parents: Joseph M. and Martha E. Zook Hartzler. Children: Beverly Stoltzfus, Linda Hostetler, Mary Boldman, David, Dwight, Alvin; 13 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 24 at Bethel Mennonite Church, West Liberty.

Martin, Lucille Hattie Mitten, 85, Columbiana, Ohio, died April 30 of congestive heart failure complications. Spouse: Herbert L. Martin (deceased). Parents: Hebert and Amelia Feikert Mitten. Children: Judy Cutler, Loretta Ammons, Cindy Noling, Delores Rankin, Suzie Brady, Donald; 22 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 6 at Leetonia Mennonite Church, Leetonia, Ohio.

Martin, Ralph E., 88, Goshen, Ind., died April 10. Spouse: Ellen Rose Martin Mast. Parents: Elijah and Ella Good Mast. Children: Alice Jane Gesse, Linda Farmwald; six grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 14 at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Kouts, Ind.

Miller, Belle Ruthann, Cincinnati, Ohio, was stillborn on May 21. Parents: Joel Russell and Abbie Bauman Miller. Siblings: Eve Miller, Lillian Miller.

Miller, Erma M. Miller, 102, Topeka, Ind., died May 27. Spouse: Ivan M. Miller (deceased). Parents: James Elmer and Ida Eash Miller. Children: Carol Zehr, Evelyn Byler, Gaylord, Maurice, Larry, Delmar, Ronald; 19 grandchildren; 32 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 30 at Emma Mennonite Church, Topeka.

Mosimann, Ella Barbara, 99, Chesterfield, Mo., died Feb. 26. Parents: Andrew and Barbara Rocke Mosimann. Funeral: May 16 at Prairieview Mennonite Church, Flanagan, Ill.

Peters, Bertha Regier, 83, Henderson, Neb., died April 18. Spouse: Carl D. Peters. Parents: John A. and Nettie Siemens Regier. Children: Joe, Linda Heisey; three grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 25 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Sommers, Wesley W., 84, Bluffton, Ohio, died May 21. Spouse: Betty Edinger Sommers. Children: Bruce N., John, Philip, Kevin L., Mark; 11 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 23 at Chiles and Sons Laman Funeral Home, Bluffton.

Stauffer, Melvin P., 74, Mendon, Mich., died May 23 of a heart attack. Spouse: Clara Jean Yoder Stauffer. Parents: Peter and Amanda Stoltzfus Stauffer. Children: Ernie, Carol Kotva; four grandchildren. Funeral: May 28 at Calvary Chapel, Sturgis, Mich.

Zehr, Agnes L. Zehr, 101, Hopedale, Ill., died May 25. Spouse: Albert H. Zehr. Parents: Amos and Pearl Zehr. Children: Loretta Simmons, Marcella Zehr; three grandchildren. Funeral: May 28 at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

Ziegler, Mae C., 97, Sarasota, Fla., died May 22 of complications from a broken hip. Funeral: May 27 at Toale Brothers Chapel, Sarasota.

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Mennonite Publishing Network seeks applicants for a ***contract editor for Adult Bible Study***, a quarterly curriculum based on Bible outlines determined by the Committee on Uniform Series, published by Faith & Life Resources. The editor is expected to assign writers for the teacher guide, student book and online weekly edition, edit the manuscripts and manage these resources through to production. The ideal candidate will have an advanced degree in biblical studies and Anabaptist theology, editorial experience and an awareness of current adult education teaching methodology. Applicants should be active members in good standing of a Mennonite congregation in Mennonite Church USA or Mennonite Church Canada. This position is available for fall 2009. For more information or to apply, send a letter of application and resumé by June 30, 2009, to Eleanor Snyder, director of Faith & Life Resources, Mennonite Publishing Network, 490 Dutton Drive, Unit C7, Waterloo, ON N2L 6H7, or email esnyder@mpn.net.

***Nursing faculty.* Bethel College** (North Newton, Kan.) is seeking a full-time nursing faculty with expertise in medical-surgical nursing. If you are ready to work with a faculty team committed to excellence and continuous improvement, this may be the role for you. Start date: Fall 2009. See the complete position announcement at http://www.bethelks.edu/bc/careers/openings.php. EOE/AA

Mennonite Publishing Network seeks applicants for ***contract editor of Purpose: Stories of Faith and Promise***, a monthly magazine published by Faith & Life Resources for adult Christians in Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. The editor is expected to work with the editorial committee in choosing themes, solicit and edit articles and manage issues through to production. Candidates for this position should have editorial experience, awareness of the Mennonite church constituencies and enthusiasm about representing God's healing and hope in the world. They should also be active members in good standing of a Mennonite congregation in one of these two denominations. This position is available for fall of 2009. To apply, send a letter of application and resumé by June 30, 2009, to Eleanor Snyder, Director, Faith & Life Resources, Mennonite Publishing Network, 490 Dutton Dr., Unit C7, Waterloo, ON N2L 6H7, or email esnyder@mpn.net.

Mennonite Central Committee is seeking a ***volunteer service worker*** for a Resource Distribution Coordinator position in Akron, Pa. This person works with communications staff and others within MCC to plan, market and ensure easy access of products. Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience in business, marketing or communications required. To request a job description or to send a resumé and letter of interest contact Prem Dick at: psd@mcc.org or call 717-859-1151. Please send letter of interest and resumé by July 1, 2009.

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Laurelville Mennonite Church Center is seeking a full-time ***director of marketing and advancement***. This position calls for a creative person with gifts in developing, advancing and communicating the mission and vision of LMCC with constituents and the media. Expertise in computer technology and Web site development is required. College education and previous experience is preferred. Starting date August. On campus housing is available. Contact Laurelville at info@laurelville.org or call 724-423-2056 or 800-839-1021.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email Advertising@TheMennonite.org.

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Books on following Jesus

Gordon Houser

One of the marks of Anabaptist Christians is the emphasis on following Jesus—not just in word but in deed. Many books help us do just that as disciples of our Lord.

"Follow Me": A History of Christian Intentionality by Ivan J. Kauffman (Cascade Books, 2009, $30) presents an overview of Christian history through the rubric of monastic and lay evangelical intentionality. Kauffman concentrates on individuals and movements that have focused on Jesus' call to follow him and that have influenced the development of Western civilization. This is a helpful, accessible book.

Solitude and Compassion: The Path to the Heart of the Gospel by Gus Gordon (Orbis Books, 2009, $18) seeks to bring together vertical (solitude) and horizontal (solidarity) in Christian spirituality. Gordon writes that "we are incredibly sophisticated in our society when it comes to finances, new technologies, smart bombs, sports, cars, entertainment, but all of a sudden revert to infancy when it comes to religion or spirituality." He helps rectify that in this incisive, challenging book.

Eugene H. Peterson adopts poet Emily Dickinson's phrase in *Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers* (Eerdmans, 2008, $24) and looks at Jesus' indirect way of communicating God's way. Peterson writes, "Parables release the adrenaline of urgency into our bloodstream." Pastors will find much grist for sermons in this book.

The Economics of Honor: Biblical Reflections on Money and Property by Roelf Haan (Eerdmans, 2009, $15) also has much of use for sermons and deals with a key element in following Jesus: money and how we relate to it.

Many books do more than talk about following Jesus; they illustrate it. One important one is *In Harm's Way: A History of Christian Peacemaker Teams* by Kathleen Kern (Cascade Books, 2009, $49). Kern offers an insider's detailed history of CPT, noting that CPT's central purpose "is to glorify the Prince of Peace."

Central to Jesus' teaching is the Beatitudes. In *Claiming the Beatitudes: Nine Stories from a New Generation* (The Alban Institute, 2009, $17), Anne Sutherland Howard tells how nine different students live out different Beatitudes, then reflects on their experiences.

N. Gerald Shenk tells more stories from around the world in *Hope Indeed! Remarkable Stories of Peacemakers* (Good Books, 2008, $9.95). This small but powerful book is both challenging and inspiring.

Jimi Calhoun tackles an insidious sin in *A Story of Rhythm and Grace: What the Church Can Learn from Rock and Roll About Healing the Racial Divide* (Brazos Press, 2009, $15.99). Calhoun, who played bass alongside many world-famous musicians and later became a pastor, offers his experiences of racism and shows what religion might learn from rock and roll.

In *Reasoning Together: A Conversation on Homosexuality* (Herald Press, 2009, $17.99), Mennonite theologians Ted Grimsrud and Mark Thiessen Nation model how to deal peacefully with differences in their arguments about what the Scriptures teach about homosexuality and what empirical evidence tells us about God's homosexual children.

BOOKS

American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House by Jon Meacham (Random House, 2008, $18) is a Pulitzer Prize-winning biography that details the tumultuous context in which Jackson fought to create a country where no state or indigenous nation was more important than the sum of the whole. Unlike his predecessors (and later James Buchanan), who thought the president should primarily serve Congress, Jackson recast the presidency as the place where "the people" had their voice. For students of early presidents—or those interested in the formation of the Democratic Party—this account of a Tennessee slave owner whose policies displaced so many Native Americans is required reading.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South by Steven P. Miller (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009, $29.95) explores the complexities of Graham's participation and influence in social movements of his time—the civil rights movement in particular. For instance, Graham held his first intentionally desegregated southern crusade in 1953 but also established ways to "explicitly prioritize the conversion of souls over the transformation of racial sentiments," Miller writes. This biography offers invaluable insights when examining the profound influence of Graham on faith, religion and politics in the United States. Miller has taught at Goshen (Ind.) College.—*Anna Groff*

FILMS

Angels and Demons (PG-13) is the second Ron Howard movie based on a Dan Brown novel. Like *The Da Vinci Code*, this is wildly implausible, confusing and preaches a theology that is ignorant of much church history, though the film is less anti-Catholic than the book.—*gh*

Sin Nombre (R) follows the journey of a father, daughter and uncle from Honduras toward "el norte." It also shows the horrific life of gang members in Mexico, one of whom meets the daughter and helps her. Their tragedies mix with movements of grace in this harrowing film.—*gh*

Up (PG) is Pixar's latest animated gem, this time in 3-D. Balloon salesman Carl Fredricksen, 78, sets out for South America but finds he has a stowaway on the trip. The first half of this delightful film is brilliant. It will appeal to children, film buffs and the elderly as it touches on themes of grief, parenting and seeking purpose in one's life.—*gh*

The Lemon Tree (NR) illustrates Israeli-West Bank border tensions through the powerful story of a courageous Palestinian woman who fights to protect her lemon grove, which the Israeli defense minister threatens to cut down for security reasons. When the Defense Minister's wife takes interest in the Palestinian woman's situation, the film explores the hope that a potential but nearly impossible friendship may bring.—*ag*

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Anna Groff

Open up to Millennial women

To fully accept women's leadership and prepare the way for the women in the Millennial* generation, Mennonite Church USA members must examine the spoken and unspoken expectations we hold—and determine which remain appropriate for today.

A 2008 survey reveals a decline in the number of women in leadership: At the Mennonite Women USA retreat in March, Mary Shertz reported on a self-study by Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. The study found that, with AMBS, fewer women are in leadership positions now than a decade ago. Also, men chair all churchwide agency boards (although Sharon Waltner is the moderator for Mennonite Church USA).

Where are the women? Perhaps the system frustrates women leaders. In May, a 30-something male friend who works in a Mennonite Church USA agency (and wishes to remain anonymous) pointed out that over time, systemic and institutional oppression wears down women in leadership.

There may be another reason: Some women who hold leadership positions feel stifled by a narrow view of what it means to lead and be a leader. For example, in some church settings, many members—consciously or subconsciously—expect a pastor to be married and most likely have a family. How does this underlying expectation affect single women called to serve in the church?

If we hope to attract today's Millennial women for leadership positions, patterns that have discouraged women leaders must change.

Or, often church members consider a pastor the main authority figure for the church body. But many women, as well as men, prefer serving on a leadership team model. For example, an interim leadership team at Reba Place Church in Evanston, Ill., includes Charlotte Lehman, Candi Wiggins and Celina Varela. In this case and others, a variety of perspectives and leadership styles grace a single congregation, and those serving on the team have peer support.

Another sign of hope for women in leadership is the May 16 ordination of associate pastor Sue Conrad at my home congregation, East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, in Lancaster, Pa. Conrad is one of the first women in Lancaster Mennonite Conference to be ordained since the bishop board's approval in May 2008.

I fight discouragement from the lack of women in leadership by observing the leadership abilities and aspirations of other Millennial women around me.

"More than two-thirds of Millennial women" oppose women returning to traditional roles, write Morley Winograd and Michael D. Hais in their book *Millennial Makeover: MySpace, YouTube and the Future of American Politics* (Rutgers University Press, 2009).

These same Millennial women still highly value family and relationships. Winograd and Hais use the main character in the Millennial-esque movie, *The Devil Wears Prada,* to illustrate the challenge facing many Millennials: the choice between a high-powered but life-dominating career and a more service-oriented vocation that also values family and relationships. Millennials often choose the latter.

From my observations, we Millennial women take interest in entering leadership positions in the church and elsewhere. However, structures must be open to our particular leadership styles.

What can churches do? Remember that people experience leadership calls at a young age. A girl will quickly pick up on the cues of whether her thoughts, contributions and leadership skills earn equal value to those of the boys around her.

Keep this in mind when asking young girls to participate in worship, when mentoring girls in high school or when reconnecting with college students and young adults.

If Mennonite Church USA hopes to attract today's Millennial women for leadership positions, patterns that have discouraged women leaders must change.—*ag*

*The term "Millennial" is used to describe the generation born between 1982 and 2003.

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

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coworkers in the gospel

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Observations on 36 years of leadership

James Schrag is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

To the Library,

Thanks for the paychecks!

James S.

In November I will retire from 36 years of congregational (23 years) and churchwide (13 years) leadership. Here are some observations:

Pastors and congregations:

- Congregational members don't ask if they love the pastor. They want to know if the pastor loves them.
- Pastors don't pick who is in the congregation.
- The pastor is not the coach of the team or the captain of the ship. Jesus claims those roles. The pastor is a member of the ship's crew who is entrusted with the solitary role of occupying the crow's nest, ready to shout "Land ho!"
- The congregation has two requests of their pastor: When times are good they say, "Pastor, lead us on, but don't forget to keep us together." When times are bad they say, "Pastor, keep us together, but don't forget to lead us on."
- Who you are is more important than what you do.
- Congregations are always a mix of theology and sociology. We should distinguish them.
- Congregations have longer memories than their pastor.

Churchwide:

- The church is not an organization, it's an organism—the body of Christ.
- "The church" is never someone else, "out there." It is always "right here," starting with me.
- Stereotypes never carry more than 25 percent of the truth.
- The cup God grants is always half full.
- No one has a corner on the truth. But we had better have a corner of it.
- Getting to know people always changes our opinion of them.
- Leaders who want change need to change first.
- Our default strategy is passive-aggressive.
- When we avoid conflict, it usually gets worse.
- Leaders lead by making mistakes.
- Leaders ask for forgiveness, not permission.
- The next generation needs to be multi-lingual.
- Every good idea can go to seed.
- Jesus said, "Love your enemies," not, "Don't have enemies."
- When push comes to shove, everyone is "congregational," no matter our theology or history.
- Mennonites spiritualize too many things. If we acknowledged our humanity more, our witness might be strengthened.
- We are great hosts but poor guests.
- We seldom change by choice; change is wedded to necessity.
- Merger of any kind runs stiff competition from our bent toward "righteous separation."
- Our martyr heritage is the lens through which we view the world.
- God is blessing Mennonite Church USA with renewal from the global south and people of color.
- We can always learn more about "agreeing and disagreeing in love."
- "Being missional" may be more easily "caught" than "taught."
- Requiring a two-thirds vote is not always the same as "it is good to the Holy Spirit and to us."
- Leaders need to view things from the balcony.
- Mennonite Church USA is neither liberal nor conservative; it is both.
- Prophecy can come from all points on the theological spectrum, including the center.
- Vision for the Christian is seeing things like God sees them.
- "God is working His purpose out, as year succeeds to year" (HWB #638).
- It's not about us. TM

TheMennonite

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Goshen, IN 46526

Mennonite
Church
USA

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Cover: AMBS intern Joanne Gallardo (center) with Eighth Street Mennonite (Goshen, Ind.) pastors Kevin Farmwald and Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau. Photo by Vada Snider

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Can't make our own rules

I was disappointed that *The Mennonite* chose to feature the article "Thoughts on Abortion" by Debra Sapp-Yarwood (June 2). While I sympathize with Yarwood—infertility is a difficult burden to bear—her comment, "I couldn't believe that God would create life in me only to destroy it cavalierly. One death I could accept; not three," indicates that she is unwilling to accept that God knows what he is doing. Sometimes we don't understand how God works, but that doesn't mean we can go on and make our own rules to suit our own purposes.

When God asked Abraham to offer Isaac, that didn't make any sense either. Or who can figure Job out. But does that mean that we just throw it all out? No. We need to echo Job: "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, may the name of the Lord be praised."

Only God can create life—only God has the right take it away. Yes, it gets messy. People suffer the consequences of sin—sometimes other people's sin—and we all need to do whatever we can to ease that burden and show God's love. But we can't just start making up our own rules in order to try to make everyone feel better about it. God gave us his Word—we need to take it seriously. *—Phil Rosenberger, Farmington, N.M.*

Strategy for unintended pregnancies

The June 2 article "Thoughts on Abortion" led me to consider my own beliefs and work on abortion. Debra Sapp-Yarwood's article rightly notes the challenge, struggle and pain of abortion. In response to her call to "prepare a personal strategy with regard to unintended pregnancies" I offer the following tasks for the entire church. May we:

- Reaffirm our belief that life is a gift from God. We do not take life in any form or for any reason, not because it is sacred but because it is a gift from God, and only God can take life.
- Reassert male involvement and responsibilities in pregnancies and children. We cannot condemn abortion until we decisively condemn male promiscuity.
- Repent of our sin for failing to provide refuge for unwanted children and needy mothers/parents. May we also repent of our sin to take a child's life for whatever reasons.
- Reject privatizing abortion by making it a personal, private matter. It is the responsibility of the whole church community to care for and journey with women facing the challenge of a difficult pregnancy.
- Reject the priority of personal rights. We believe that we do not have a right to our own bodies because when we are baptized we become members of one another.
- Pledge to be a counter-witness to society by being a community of Christ. We will practice hospitality for the unwanted child, journey with women facing a difficult pregnancy and offer God's mercy and forgiveness for the woman who has obtained an elective abortion.*—Weldon Martens, Henderson, Neb.*

Article helped enter the conversation

Thank you for the new vocabulary, "nonconceptionist," in Debra Sapp-Yarwood's article, "Thoughts on Abortion" (June 2). Though I've never known how to articulate it, I, too, am a nonconceptionist with a high regard for the sanctity of life. And that is not always a comfortable place to be. Sapp-Yarwood helped me know better how to enter into the conversation and be true to myself and my trust in God.*—Betsy Headrick McCrae, Lakewood, Colo.*

Cover photo not Jesus-like

"Thoughts on Abortion" by Debra Sapp-Yarwood (June 2) was a more Jesus-like approach to the issue of abortion than the cover photo. Thanks for taking on such a tough issue.*—Steve Mininger, Sod, W.V.*

More involved in 'life' issues

The editorial "Don't Abort the Truth" (June 2) illuminates some of the delicate issues surrounding pro-choice/pro-life and Mennonite theology. However, it fails to bring the truth to "full-term." Much more is involved in the "life" issue than death.

Pro-life must mean much more than antiabortion, antiwar and anti-death penalty. Pro-life should mean pro- "stuff," as well. Pro-life should mean

IN THIS ISSUE

Eleanor Niemala Beachy writes, "The role of women in the New Testament as active participants in ministry often has been ignored, especially in the teaching received by [older adults] in our early years" (page 8). She then provides fresh images of New Testament leaders Phoebe, Priscilla and Junia. Menno Simons' saying about "true evangelical faith" gets a deeper look by Ted Lewis (page 12); he wonders why many of Simons' original injunctions have been left out in current renditions. Mennonite Church USA executive director Jim Schrag provides his last column (page 2) and uses the occasion to describe things he's learned during 36 years of ministry. Mennonite Central Committee's "historic" restructuring is the subject of our lead news story (page 19) and an editorial that asks MCC not to forget the "old wine" (page 32).*—Editor* pro-health care so that mothers and their children and unborn children have a reasonable quality of life. Pro-life should mean pro-welfare so that a family making the choice to bring a child to term can support that child with food, clothes, shelter and parental time. Pro-life should mean pro-education so that children can gain a foundation to be productive citizens.

In reality, pro-life often advocates one more negation: anti-taxation. Many pro-life political candidates sign pledges not to increase taxes. Yet bringing children into the world has a cost to society above the cost to the parents. When I see pro-life rallies, I want to stop and ask, "Are you willing to pay for the well-being of the children you hope to save?"

Please put your money where your words are. Support children beyond the womb. Bring the truth to full-term. Following the pro-life stance to its logical conclusion raises the issue of access to basic services for parents and children. In the end, pro-life should mean pro-justice, another issue in which the Mennonite church can be a leader. *—Carmen Shelly, Lenexa, Kan.*

Need more leaders to pitch manure

Kudos and more kudos to both the interviewer and the interviewee and *The Mennonite* for picturing the moderator of Mennonite Church USA in farm cap, blue jeans, leather gloves, rubber boots and pitching manure with a five-tine pitchfork ("Waltner Completes Her Two-year Term as Mennonite Church USA Moderator," June 16). Everything was present in the photo except the smell.

I really couldn't believe it—but "it" was gorgeous, just gorgeous. What a pity we can't see photos of the rest of the Executive Board and of pastors and of other leaders (oops, I really mean "servants"), such as college and seminary profs and theologians doing good, old-fashioned (yes, and smelly) hard manual labor rather than the usual poses of board discussion groups and staff meetings in prayer. So intriguing were the unusual photos that I went back and read the article a second time. Anytime a "moderator" of Mennonite Church USA with a five-tine pitchfork poses beside a New Holland manure spreader, she must have something worthwhile to say. And perhaps, with tongue in cheek, it might be helpful and conducive to greater cooperation and understanding (Mennonites call it "discernment") of what is and what is not peripheral for all the various boards and their members to meet occasionally in a cattle lot around a New Holland spreader, with pitchfork in hand.*—Orville D. Schmidt, Wakarusa, Ind.*

Whose church is it anyway?

Thanks for Ron Adams' article, "Whose Church is it Anyway?" (June 16). Some years ago a leader on the West Coast asked me, "What keeps you going and encouraged today?" I responded, "I seek to keep the long view and the worldview." I know the church will continue. Our Lord said, "The strongholds of hell will not stop the church's ongoing." But he goes to people who respond to his Spirit and Word.

A worldview is also helpful. Never since Pentecost has the church worldwide grown as rapidly as it is today. I've startled many a traveler, who finds out I am a Mennonite and immediately associates me with the Amish, when I say, "Most of the Mennonite church is nonwhite."

I observed while preaching many times across the church that a congregation stays with its original vision. If it starts to provide a place for Mennonites or some other purpose, it continues as such. If it starts with an outreach vision, it continues with this. Today Betty and I are members of a congregation begun as an outreach. We are 70 percent non-Mennonite background, with two services—not for two kinds of worship services but because this little church holds only 120 people, and we topped 200 recently. This is why I wrote in

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

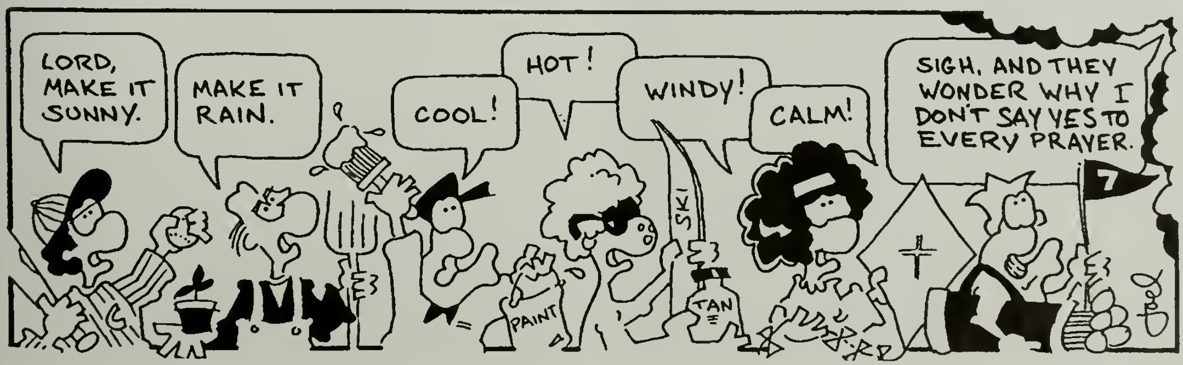
When someone on the street asks me for money, I prefer to: (72 votes)

- ○ Offer to buy them food (35%)
- ○ Give them money (26%)
- ○ Decline and donate money to charitable organizations (24%)
- ○ None of the above (15%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Continued on page 31

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


LORD, MAKE IT SUNNY.
MAKE IT RAIN.
COOL!
HOT!
WINDY!
CALM!
SIGH. AND THEY WONDER WHY I DON'T SAY YES TO EVERY PRAYER.
PAINT
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IN BRIEF

Youth sing for Convention 2009

The junior high youth choir of Mennonite Church of Normal (Ill.) sang through *Sing the Story* on May 31 with the choir director, Cindy Ropp, to raise money for its trip to Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009. Individuals pledged money per song, while others donated lump sums. The group sang at least two verses of all 124 songs and raised about $1,700. *—Mennonite Church of Normal*

The healing power of plants

If you want to help speed the recovery of a hospital patient who's had surgery, bring a flowering plant, preferably a potted plant, suggests a study by the Department of Horticulture, Recreation and Forestry at Kansas State University published in the *American Society for Horticultural Science* (December 2008). When 90 patients recovering from an appendectomy were randomly assigned to rooms with and without flowering plants, those who stayed in the rooms with the plants reported less need for medication, lower blood pressure and heart rate, less pain and less anxiety and fatigue, as well as better overall recovery than those staying in rooms without flowering plants.*—Spirituality & Health*

Louisiana family gives back to Akron Church

AKRON, Pa.—The Connor family—David, Vicky, Victoria and David Jr.—came from Cameron, La., to visit Akron Mennonite Church on June 13. AMC worked with Mennonite Disaster Service building a Partnership Home Program house for the Connors, whose trailer house was completely destroyed by Hurricane Rita. The house was built primarily on the parking lot of AMC, then dismantled, sent to Cameron and put up there. After their house was built, the Connors received $20,000 from the state of Louisiana. Rather than use it to furnish their house, the Connors donated $20,000 back to AMC to be used to build another house for someone in Cameron. "That's y'all's money," David said.*—Mennonite Disaster Service*

Fund for Peoplehood Education awards grants

GOSHEN, Ind.—Mennonite Education Agency awarded grants to the following recipients through its Fund for Peoplehood Education: Ray Gingerich received a $3,455 grant for "Our Journeys with Jesus," a colloquium of Mennonite educators, administrators and pastors; Albert Meyer received a $3,000 grant for the publication of *Realizing Our Intentions: A Guide for Churches and Colleges with Distinctive Missions*; Eastern Mennonite School, Harrisonburg, Va., received a $2,000 grant for the first phase of its history book, *Stories from the Past, Seeds for the Future*; and Quakertown Christian (Pa.) School will receive up to $500 to host pastors at its Open House for Pastors event. *—Mennonite Church USA*

Nancy Miller

Kansas pastors on sabbatical bike across the state

Three Western District Conference Kansas pastors on sabbatical biked across Kansas with more than 800 other bikers. The pastors, from left, are Eric Massanari, Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.; Corey Miller, Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton; Heidi Regier Kreider, Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, Kan.*—Western District Conference*

MMA's Sharing Funds runs out of money

GOSHEN, Ind.—This year, economic conditions nationally caused MMA's Sharing Fund to run out of money mid-June. However, MMA has designated an additional $50,000 in 2009 for a special Faith in the Future Grant to help those hardest hit by the economic downturn.

To stretch this special grant across as many churches as possible, the new grant will be a three-to-one matching grant. For every $3 a church gives toward a need, MMA will contribute $1.*—MMA*

Rosa charged with crimes, still missing

CHICAGO—Joe Rosa, a missing church planter from Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference, has been charged with several crimes. Rosa has been missing from his home near Lewisburg, Pa., since May 21.

Pennsylvania State Police continue to search for Rosa, Cpl. Greg Watson said June 11. Police filed charges June 9 against Rosa, listing five counts of indecent assault, two counts of recklessly endangering the welfare of children and four counts of corruption of minors.

The events in question occurred between 2005 and 2009, according to the police reports. Patrick Beaver, a state trooper and the investigating officer, reported that Samuel López informed him of possible misconduct by Rosa. López is the representative to the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA from Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church).

"López indicated that he had received a letter from a young man who had attended Pastor Rosa's church," Beaver wrote in the affidavit of probable cause. "López noted that the church has asked Pastor Rosa to resign from his position with the church in light of the allegations and pending investigation." López could not be reached for comment because he was traveling when called.

The Shalom congregation has terminated Rosa's pastoral role, said Joanne Dietzel, Lancaster Conference coordinator. Lancaster Conference has suspended Rosa's credentials pending the outcome of the investigation, Dietzel said.*—Celeste Kennel-Shank of* Mennonite Weekly Review

CPT reservist, others face littering charges

TUSCON, Ariz.—On June 1, Christian Peacemaker Teams reservist John Heid and two other companions placed three dozen gallons of water on an active migrant trail in Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, southwest of Tucson. The three were confronted by a Fish and Wildlife officer, escorted out of the area and face possible prosecu-

Peter Anderson

First Cambodian Mennonite pastor licensed for ministry

Living Water Community Church senior pastor Sally Schreiner Youngquist (right) interviews pastor Samrach Nuth during his licensing service May 31 in Chicago. To his knowledge, Nuth is the first Cambodian to be licensed for ministry in the Mennonite churches of North America. After mentoring from Reba Place Church in Evanston, Ill., Nuth helped found the multicultural daughter congregation, Living Water Community Church, in 1995 in Chicago.—*Living Water Community Church*

tion for littering. This year, migrants crossing this desert are dying at a record rate; 89 bodies have been recovered to date, eight of these from the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge.—*CPT*

Third Way Media wins a quartet of awards

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Mennonite Media (which became Third Way Media on July 1) has picked up four media production awards from the American Women in Radio and Television (AWRT), the WorldFest Houston Film Festival and the Videographer Awards. Third Way Media will continue as a division of Mennonite Mission Network and as part of Mennonite Church USA.

The AWRT awarded a Gracie® Award to Third Way Media's *Unsung: Family Voices on Mental Illness* radio spots. In May, the 42nd annual WorldFest Houston Film Festival presented two Platinum Remi awards to Bill Curtis, general manager of Vision Video, who submitted the Third Way Media documentaries to the Remis, the third largest competitive film festival in North America. Vision Video handles some marketing and distribution for Third Way Media TV documentaries. *Embracing Aging: Families Facing Change* and *Finding Hope in Recovery: Families Living with Addiction* were given first place platinum awards. *Pax Service: An Alternative to War* received an Award of Distinction from Videographer Awards announced in early June.—*Mennonite Media staff*

Global Youth Summit delegates confirmed

STRASBOURG, France—By June 3, 46 delegates from 33 countries were confirmed for the Mennonite World Conference Global Youth Summit in Asunción, Paraguay. GYS will be held at Colegio de Gutenberg, July 10-12, just before MWC's global Assembly Gathered. Each applicant was required to submit three things: relevant issues faced by the youth in his or her community as identified in a consultative process with young church members, a definition of service from a minimum of 50 respondents and the applicant's own biblical exegesis on the attitude of a servant. —*MWC*

New master's program launched in Ukraine

ODESSA, Ukraine—Educators at Odessa Theological Seminary will launch a master's program in applied theology in late August. The program is a partnership between the Odessa Seminary and International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, Czech Republic.

Although potential students are involved in preparations, financial difficulties make it challenging for them to afford the program. However, seminary leaders said a master's program is crucial for training new leaders and for the future of the Odessa Seminary. So far, eight students have signed up for the program, and two more may join the group.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

New EMS curriculum offers more flexibility

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, faculty approved major changes to the Master of Divinity degree. The biggest change in this degree is a reduction of required core classes and a more flexible "ministry track" arrangement, which allows students to choose electives based on their interests.

The four tracks for the Master of Divinity are pastoral ministry (for traditional congregations and emerging church communities), academic, cross-cultural and community mission and specialized ministries like chaplain, pastoral counselor or spiritual director.—*EMS*

—*compiled by Anna Groff*

IN BRIEF

MPN appoints new editorial director

Amy Gingerich has been appointed to the newly created position of Herald Press editorial director at Mennonite Publishing Network. Gingerich is working as managing editor of the *Gather 'Round* curriculum. From 1998 to 2004 she had a variety of roles with the *South Bend* (Ind.) *Tribune* and the *Vacaville* (Calif.) *Reporter*. Gingerich has a Master of Divinity degree from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif., and a bachelor's degree from Goshen (Ind.) College. —*Mennonite Church USA*

Lederach receives Niebuhr award

John Paul Lederach, the founding director of the conflict transformation program at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., received the Reinhold Niebuhr Award from the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind., which annually awards a student, faculty member or administrator whose life and writings promote or exemplify social justice. He is professor of international peacebuilding at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at Notre Dame.—*EMU*

The New Testament affirms women as coworkers with Paul.

by Eleanor Niemela Beachy

A member in our older adult Sunday school class expressed surprise that women traveled with Jesus and the "twelve," although this is recorded prominently several times in the Gospels (Luke 8:1-3; Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41; Luke 23:49, 55).

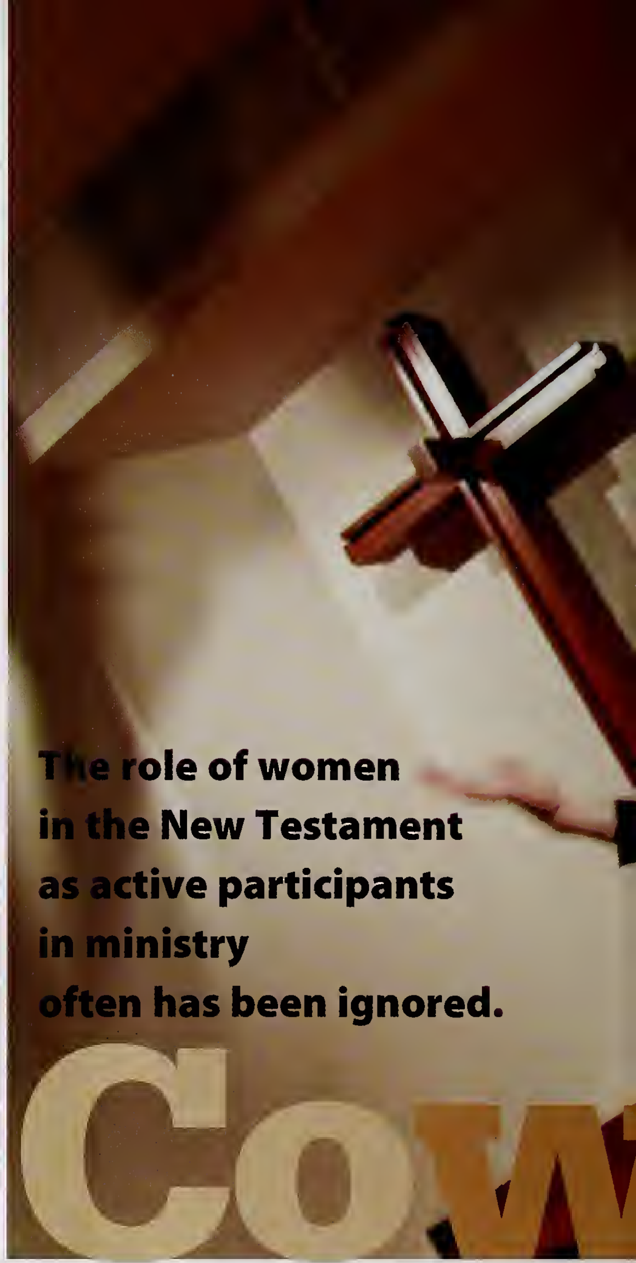
"I must have missed that," she said. Her comment is not surprising, however, since the role of women in the New Testament as active participants in ministry often has been ignored, especially in the teaching received by people in our age group in our early years. Too often this is still the case.

Much of the teaching in our churches has been based on Paul's responses to the issue in his letters to the early churches. I find it helpful to look also at the roles of the women he regarded as "coworkers" in these churches.

Several are mentioned in his greetings to the church at Rome (Romans 16:1-16). First he introduces Phoebe: "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well" (Romans 16:1-2).

Possibly Phoebe delivered the letter from Paul to the church at Rome. Her home city of Cenchreae was a Greek seaport on the Gulf of Aegina, seven miles east of Corinth. The trip by sea from Cenchreae to Rome took one to two weeks. The time of departure was never certain, as the ship would not sail until the weather was favorable, with winds from the right direction. Even then, the sailing date could be delayed by a bad omen. This could be anything from a raven landing on the ship's mast and croaking to the captain to having a dream about a black goat. When, at last, word came that the ship was ready to sail, Phoebe would have gone down the mole to board. On the way she could have seen a temple, aware that a sheep or a bull was being sacrificed to the gods in an effort to ensure a safe journey, another indication of how dangerous these voyages could be.

Since ships were built for hauling cargo and not equipped specifically for passengers, Phoebe would have had to take along food as well as necessities for cooking and sleeping. One wonders who might have traveled with her, since Paul mentions no husband or other companion. He spoke of her as a leader of the church at Cenchreae and gave no indication of any other person in charge there. In his introduction of her, he used two titles—"diakonos" and "prostatis"—to describe her role in the Cenchreae church.



The role of women in the New Testament as active participants in ministry often has been ignored.

The Greek word "diakonos" basically means "servant" and in Paul's usage refers to one who serves the church in a leadership capacity. When used to describe the roles of Paul, Tychicus, Epaphras and Timothy, "diakonos" has been translated as "minister" and "deacon" as well as "servant," while in Phoebe's case the same word has been translated as "servant" or sometimes "deaconess" in earlier versions of the Bible; current versions, the NRSV and TNIV, use "deacon." "Deaconess" is a mistranslation, since the gender of the Greek word is masculine, not feminine.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in her book *In Memory of Her*, writes that the designation "diakonoi" refers in both the New Testament and in secular writing of the time to teaching and preaching.

Fiorenza also points out that the second word

orkers

Preaching: Rachel Gerber, First Mennonite, Denver

Photo: Laura Amstutz, EMS

Paul uses to describe Phoebe, "prostatis," translated in the NRSV as "benefactor," in its noun form is not found anywhere else in the New Testament; in other Greek writings it means ruler, leader or protector. She adds that a verb form of the word is used in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 in an appeal to the believers to "respect those who labor among you and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you." We don't know precisely what Phoebe did to benefit Paul and others. We do know Paul respected Phoebe as a coworker in the spiritual nurture of the church.

Paul continued with greetings to Prisca (also known as Priscilla) and Aquila, "who work with me in Christ Jesus" (Romans 16:3). Exiled from Rome by an edict expelling Jews ordered by Emperor Claudius around A.D. 49, this married couple traveled to Corinth. This meant being driven from their home, their business, their community and their country. Nevertheless, Luke's account emphasizes not the difficulties they faced in this commercially bustling and morally corrupt city but setting up their home and business in the interest of spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.

Paul respected Phoebe as a coworker in the spiritual nurture of the church.

Here they were joined by Paul, a coworker in their tent-making occupation and, even more exciting, a coworker in the gospel. They generously opened their home to him (Acts 18:1-3). For a year and a half they labored together, establishing a core of believers there.

Paul then decided to leave for Syria. Priscilla and Aquila went along as far as Ephesus. On the way they stopped at Cenchreae (Acts 18:18). No doubt Priscilla met a friend and coworker and leader in the church there named Phoebe. Again, at Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila's home became the center for meetings of the new Christian community.

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

When later Paul left to continue his journey toward Jerusalem, Priscilla and Aquila remained in Ephesus. Here one day in the synagogue, they were delighted to hear a fellow Jew preaching boldly and enthusiastically about Jesus. Though he spoke with great eloquence and knew the Scriptures well, his understanding was limited, as "he knew only the baptism of John." The couple introduced themselves and learned that his name was Apolos and that he was from Alexandria. Priscilla and Aquila then privately "explained the way of God to him more accurately" (Acts 18:24-26). Here we notice that both were involved in teaching a man who became a leader in the Christian movement and that Priscilla, who is named first, must have taken the lead role. In Acts 18:18, Luke also gave Priscilla's name first. When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:19), he included greetings from "Aquila and Prisca," but when he wrote to the church at Rome, he reversed the order, saying, "Greet Prisca and Aquila" (Romans 16:3). This suggests that Priscilla was "out front" in their shared ministry. Even today giving a wife's name before her husband's is not "normal" usage.

Apparently, after Claudius died in A.D. 54, the edict against Jewish people residing in Rome was lifted, and the couple returned to their home. Paul added that they had been his coworkers in Christ Jesus.

Through house churches women played a crucial role in bringing converts into the fellowship and sustaining them as a body of believers.

Not only had they given leadership to the house churches established wherever they went but they also had risked their necks for his life, Paul said, "to whom not only I give thanks but also all the churches of the Gentiles."

Again he greeted "the church in their house." The importance of house churches during the first 300 years of the church's existence can hardly be overestimated. Here teaching, worship, evangelism, fellowship and meals took place, providing both facilities and leadership for the growing Christian community.

In addition to Priscilla, Paul mentions several other women in relation to house churches, including Nympha (Colossians 4:15), Apphia (Philemon v. 1-2) and Lydia, a businesswoman (Acts 16:13-15). Through house churches women played a crucial role in bringing converts into the fellowship and sustaining them as a body of believers.

In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul continues his greetings to those who labored as coworkers in the gospel. In his book *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women*, Willard Swartley writes that of the 27 individuals Paul greeted by name, 10 were women, including Junia, to whom Paul sent greetings along with Andronicus. Of their witness, Paul writes, "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they were prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was" (Romans 16:7).

Some translations use "Junias," a shortened form of the masculine name "Junianus" instead of the feminine "Junia." According to Bernadette Brooten, who has researched the problem extensively, during the first 1,000 years of the Christian church, Bible commentators accepted the name as the feminine Junia. The King James Version also gives the name as Junia. The 1978 New International Version translated the name Junias, but the 2005 edition of Today's New International Version changed it to Junia. Similarly, the 1971 Revised Standard Version says, Andronicus and Junias were "men of note among the apostles." However, the 1989 New Revised Standard Version speaks of Andronicus and Junia as being "prominent among the apostles." We see in these examples that the translators have come full circle from the early church and the King James Version to again taking the name as the feminine Junia in today's versions. Likely, this was another Christian couple, like Priscilla and Aquila.

Paul's criteria for apostleship (in the general sense) were to endure the hardships of traveling about for the cause of Christ to "make disciples of all nations" and to risk imprisonment and even death in this mission. Andronicus and Junia met the test.

Other women who labored with Paul to spread the gospel are also mentioned in the course of his letters. Paul's passion was that the gospel be preached. We have noted his high regard for those who gave themselves to this task with him.

With this view of their working together under the direction of the Holy Spirit, facing difficulties and dangers, willingly suffering and enduring hardships to make known the gospel of Jesus Christ, we may have a better grasp of Paul's attitude toward the role of women in the church, even while we continue trying to understand the purpose of restrictive passages in this regard in his letters. We continue to ask whether these particular passages spoke to certain situations or were meant for all times and places, whether they were concessions to the culture of that day or are above any culture and whether their interpretation is subject to the intent of the total gospel message.

Eleanor Niemela Beachy is a member of Hesston (Kan.) Mennonite Church.

A follow-up visit with a homeless man

by Cindy Miller

Another encounter with Ken

Respect: Ken in San José, Calif.

I arrived in San José, Calif., almost two years to the day after I met a homeless man named Ken who changed my life. (See "My Encounter with Ken," Nov. 20, 2007, issue.) I drove an extra three hours to see if I might find Ken in his usual spot across from the convention center. I wondered: Would he still be alive? Would he be in prison? Or would he be in recovery from his demon, alcohol?

We drove past his usual spots. Dennis, my husband, and I parked the car and walked toward the park. I had a photo of Ken from two years earlier and asked men in the park who appeared to be homeless if they knew Ken. "Oh, yes," they said. "He and Jimmie James hang out around the corner, across from the convention center."

As I approached the corner, I found Ken, just as I did two years earlier. I walked up to him with a big smile on my face. His memory had faded until I introduced myself. Then he recalled our previous encounter. With him was a man named Paul, who seemed intrigued with my reunion with Ken and joined in the conversation.

Paul was a new Christian, claiming recovery but still stuck in alcoholism. I asked about Jimmie James, and Paul volunteered to go get him. I asked Ken about Sadie, the cat lady I saw bringing sandwiches to him two years before. He said Sadie had died. Just then, around the corner came Jimmie James. He said, "Hey, you're that lady from the Mennonites group. Are you here from another convention?"

I asked the three of them if they would like to join Dennis and me for lunch. Jimmie James and Ken had been busy collecting bottles for an income from the convention center and said a dumpster dive was scheduled for 2:30. I did not want to take them away from their work, so I accommodated their schedule. We went to Peggy Sue's, the local '50s diner. Ken ordered his usual, an order of fries. The others enjoyed a sandwich.

With Dennis by my side, I could focus comfortably in their company and not worry about being vulnerable as a woman. It was wonderful to reach out to them again in this way.

Earlier, while in Chicago, I had another encounter with a homeless man. The first time I encountered him, I felt intimidated by his size and gender and refused to make eye contact with him. Then I felt God's gentle voice again, nudging me to acknowledge him. After I made eye contact with him, he asked me for money. I quickly said no and passed on, then backtracked a few steps and said, "Are you hungry?"

He said, "Yes, ma'am."

I asked if we could go into the nearby store and find him something to eat. He picked up his backpack and marched behind me like an excited kid.

We continue to be in this dilemma of what to do when we encounter a homeless person. I try to follow God's leading. I trust he will convict me when I should help someone.

What would Jesus do? Would he just give them money? Though it is much easier to just hand them a dollar bill and walk past, I instead take the time to go find food with and for them. Two things happen when I do this. One, I don't feel used when I wonder if my money is going to a chemical addiction. Two, I spend a moment of quality time with a person who may well be starved for respect from society. That's what I believe Jesus would do.

Cindy Miller attends Clay Community Church, South Bend, Ind., and serves as executive office assistant for Mennonite Mission Network.

Take into account all that Menno wrote.

True evange

by Ted Lewis

I still remember how impressed I was when I first read the "True evangelical faith" text by Menno Simons. Hanging on the dining room wall of a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) couple's home, the framed Self-Help craft edition with the straw design moved me.

What I didn't know then was that Menno's original text did not have seven but 17 injunctions for embodied faith. Here is a full listing, with the familiar seven in bold:

The seamlessness of Menno's full text is impressive.

"**True evangelical faith** is of such a nature it **cannot lie dormant**, but spreads itself out in all kinds of righteousness and fruits of love;

it dies to flesh and blood (1);
it destroys all lusts and forbidden desires (2);
it seeks, serves and fears God in its inmost soul (3);
it clothes the naked (4);
it feeds the hungry (5);
it comforts the sorrowful (6);
it shelters the destitute (7);
it aids and consoles the sad (8);
it does good to those who do it harm (9);
it serves those that harm it (10);
it prays for those who persecute it (11);
it teaches, admonishes and judges us with the Word of the Lord (12);
it seeks those who are lost (13);
it binds up what is wounded (14);
it heals the sick (15);
it saves what is strong (sound) (16);
it becomes all things to all people (17).

The persecution, suffering and anguish that come to it for the sake of the Lord's truth have become a glorious joy and comfort to it."

I have two questions: Why has the edited-down version reached such prominence as a hallmark of identity for countless Mennonites? And how might a consideration of Menno's lesser-known injunctions inform a balanced life of embodied faith?

Because the shortened version looks like a seamless unity, it appears Menno is saying, "Genuine faith is always expressed through radical service to the needy." The key word here is service. The Mennonite Heritage Cruise Web site explains how the early 20th-century, postmigration era for North American Mennonites "galvanized a missional and service activism that is today the hallmark of Mennonite faith and identity."

Every religious group has cultural forms that shape and sustain a distinctive identity. These forms—stories or statements, songs or symbolic practices—help a group identify what is most important to it, but they also identify a group outwardly to a broader world.

The MCC Web site references Matthew 25 as a basis for its motivation. "This command was also expressed by Menno Simons, who wrote, 'True evangelical ...' [with the edited parts]." Other Web sites have variations. The Salvation Army site splices in "it seeks what is lost."

Another site features the seven lines on a maroon shirt. "Menno Simon gets straight to the heart of the implication of faith. One of the foundations of Anabaptism is the idea that the faith you have on the inside will show up through the way you live."

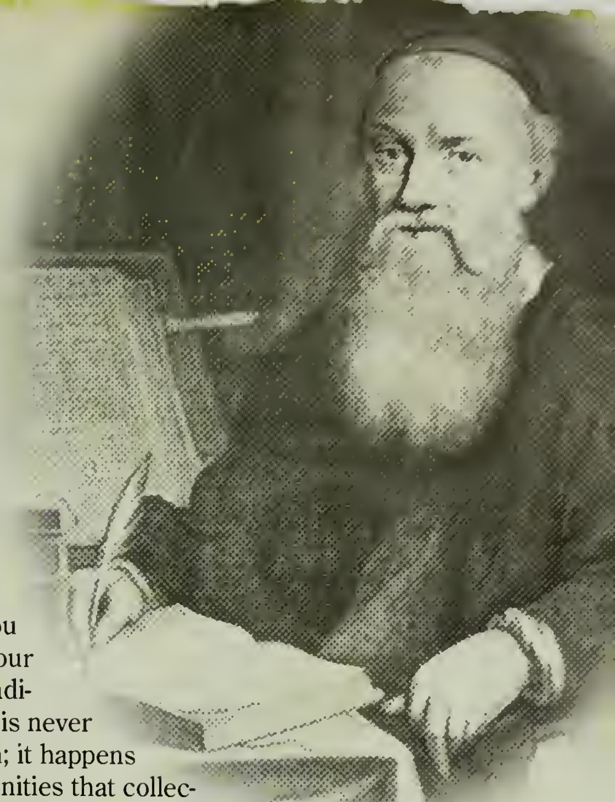
I'm not saying it's wrong to pare down Menno's text. It still affects me. But it's important to be aware of selection processes that shape Mennonite identity. In postmodern lingo, we need to understand our meta-texts, the ones we frame on our walls.

The Young Anabaptist Radicals blog site asked, "Are YARs Evangelical?" Respondents wrestled with whether they could become "YEARs" with integrity or if the E word has been "hijacked" by newer associations in the American setting. "I'd like to be evangelical in the clothe-the-naked, feed-the-hungry, love-your-enemy sort of way," one wrote, "not so much the Bible-thumping, soul-saving sort of way." Great discussion but again based on the edited version.

Another blog site provides some corrective. Seeds of the Kingdom team-member Randy Keener explains the unfortunate tension between peacemakers and evangelicals in his article "Embracing the Evangelical Faith." He wisely points out that stereotypes of peace activists and evangelicals, defined by secular society, have defined persistent polarizations in the church.

The seamlessness of Menno's full text is impressive. Opportunities for sanctification (1-3, 12), nonretaliation (9-11) and evangelism (13, 16) go hand-in-hand with opportunities for helping the needy (4-8, 14-15). In contemporary language, personal formation, relational integrity, gospel procla-

ical faith



Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton

mation all complement radical service to the poor.

The year was 1539. Menno wrote "Why I Do Not Cease Teaching and Writing." In 30 pages he defended himself against Dutch folk who were "estranged from Christ Jesus and from evangelical truth and from life eternal." They included those who forsake the gospel for a worldly life, Catholics who launched offensives against Anabaptists and Anabaptists with extremist tendencies.

In statements flanking either side of the text above, Menno emphasized how true faith is true because it will "press on to righteousness, love and obedience." "True faith … brings forth love, and love leads to obedience to the commandments of God." Such faith "cannot lie sleeping," as captured in the hymn version. It actively "spreads itself out."

Thankfully, there is no tension here between personal and social gospels. When we "work out our own salvation" in the realm of personal formation, it is not a pious matter for making us better individuals. Overcoming our "lusts and forbidden desires" (2), for instance, is ultimately about us being freed up to serve others.

The bottom line is that all our addictive habits—our impulsive, default-level patterns that involve hiding and legitimizing—dull us from being responsive to the needs of others. Lust and greed are problematic because they deaden our empathetic connectedness to others. They make our minds dwell on what we can take instead of what we can give.

We also have default levels for reacting to conflict in our relationships. When someone does something negative toward us, we do not readily return good or serve them or even pray for them. Instead we defend ourselves and launch offensives against them. Menno reminds us that true embodied faith overcomes evil with good.

By practicing all Menno's injunctions in a holistic manner, we rise above the debates about defining "evangelical" in social vs. personal terms. We recognize that every embodiment of faith has a relational dimension. True conversion is moving out of our ego-selves into a life of self-giving toward God and others.

Truncated gospels that either ignore radical peacemaking and service or ignore personal salvation and morality are prone to ignore this additional gospel aspect of ongoing formation. But when you pull them together, you can't leave dormant your own maturing as an individual. This maturing is never individualistic, though; it happens within church communities that collectively reveal God's character.

Two paragraphs later, Menno bids us "to aid and assist all mankind and injure none." What a 10-word manifesto! Such a line could go on posters, shirts and coffee mugs to reveal the heart of gospel embodiment for Mennonites. But after a mere semicolon comes this: "to crucify the flesh and its lusts." How could Menno jump so quickly from one to the other?

I'm not saying we have to frame phrases like "destroys all lusts" for our dining rooms. But we do need to reconsider a founding figure's perspective on all aspects of the gospel that can lie dormant, not eclipsing any from our view. This will entail a fresh look at traditional disciplines that foster growth and at fresh readings of the Bible.

Menno reminds us that true embodied faith overcomes evil with good.

Personal formation and relational integrity cannot be shortchanged if we are to live lives of service to those in need and lives of nonretaliation to those who provoke us. Clarence Jordan was once asked what we can do to make the world a better place. "Before we can do anything, we have to be something. Our actions have to spring from our inner character."

The edited injunctions of "True evangelical faith" are indeed "familiar words," as one woman wrote in her MCC newsletter. They serve a useful purpose to identify the heart of North American Mennonite culture. But as we reflect on Menno's fuller version, let's awaken new areas that embody true faith. This can only make for a richer ecclesial life and a sustainable commitment to serve a broken world.

Ted Lewis is active with Church of the Servant King in Eugene, Ore.

From hitting a stained-glass ceiling t program with Germany

Erna J. Fast

by Henrik Eger

Photo supplied

Erna Fast does relief work in postwar Germany.

A century ago, few women who grew up in small towns left their communities, let alone went overseas and convinced influential people on two continents to create something that never existed before. Erna J. Fast was such a woman, a Mennonite who studied to become a minister, who was denied by the church hierarchy to take on that role after World War II but who turned that pain around and became a gentle driving force as one of the founders of the Wuppertal-Bethel Exchange Program, America's oldest continually running exchange program between two colleges.

Although Fast possessed the right qualifications, she was denied the opportunity to serve as a minister.

From little Mennonite girl on the prairie to a master's degree in New York City

Fast was born on Dec. 13, 1912, in Mountain Lake, Minn., a rural town of only 1.4 square miles founded by Russian Mennonites. She graduated from Mountain Lake High School in 1931, then taught in Minnesota public schools before receiving an A.B. at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., in 1943. While many Americans took up arms during World War II, this young pacifist decided to become a minister, earning a master's degree in religious education from New York Biblical Seminary in 1946.

After World War II, a spirit of renewal swept America, and Fast wanted to become a minister. But she ran into a stained-glass ceiling, as in those days the Mennonite church did not elect women ministers. Although Fast possessed the right qualifications, she was denied the opportunity to serve as a minster, an experience that pained her greatly.

Mennonite men closed a door, but God opened a window.

Although the Mennonite community denied her the opportunity to work as a minister, they soon realized she was extraordinary, and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)—involved in reaching out to young people in postwar Germany—sent Fast to Europe. Her mission: to help provide students—including those who fled across the Iron Curtain—with food, books and clothing.

Her two years in bombed-out Germany exposed her to the devastation and deprivation under which German students struggled. As part of the Protestant Student Union in Germany, she worked with the teacher's colleges. She recalled the students' "willingness to endure hardship and privations for the sake of their search for truth, their eagerness to understand, their willingness to share, plus a precious sense of humor and love for fun in spite of the drabness of much of life in those days."

After serving on the Mennonite relief team for more than two years, she returned to America, where *Time* published her letter (Dec. 26, 1949) about the "turmoil in which Germany finds itself today." She was determined to continue ministering to students in a country that was not only materially devastated by six years of war but had been spiritually deprived for 12 years under the Nazi regime.

The next year, she returned to Bethel College, where she reported on her work in Germany and sought to raise funds for equipment, supplies and scholarships for impoverished German students. Fifty years later, she was still impressed "by the enthusiasm and vitality of the [Bethel] students in their eagerness to find ways to support the work of MCC." She noted that the American students organized a work day to earn money and even skipped meals to participate in a fund raiser. Eventually, she and the students hoped "to support

eveloping America's oldest college exchange

a project by which a personal and direct relationship might be formed" between the young Mennonites at Bethel and students in Germany. Mennonite men may have closed a door, but God was beginning to open a window.

From scraps of brown paper to a ticket to America

During a year at Bethel, she helped organize the exchange of supplies—including "writing materials, books, Bibles, dormitory supplies and even food" for needy students and their professors in a war-torn Germany who were actually writing their "lectures on scraps of brown paper left from [these] packages." During her second year, some of the Bethel students proposed inviting a student from one of the teacher's colleges in Germany to study in Kansas. To help establish this program, the administrators at Bethel called upon Fast's experience, knowledge and connections abroad to help decide which German college should receive the invitation to send a student to study in America.

Fast initially consulted with the influential German theologian and writer Horst Bannach, with her former colleague Peter Kreyssig and with Jacob T. Friesen, a representative from the MCC office in Frankfurt am Main. The four of them discussed various factors before selecting Wuppertal: both colleges enrolled a similar number of students; Wuppertal's professors offered "exceptionally fine leadership," including Johannes Harder, a Mennonite who taught sociology, and Wuppertal had opened its doors to refugee students from East Germany.

However, according to Fast, the reputation of Wuppertal's director Oskar Hammelsbeck, "played a major role in the choice." Not only was he known for his excellent work in the field of pedagogy, he showed great moral courage "as a participant of the "Bekennende Kirche" (the Confessional Church) in its struggle [against] the Nazi regime during the war," where he had been "deeply involved in the formulation of the Barmen Confession"—a document that openly opposed the "German Christian Church's" allegiance to Hitler and Third Reich ideology.

Moreover, when Fast recalled the "fine young people preparing to teach others" that were struggling after World War II, she described the students at Wuppertal as representing "the finest and best of them." The only decision left: determining which student would get the first ticket for the passage to America.

Early years of the exchange program and Fast's continuing legacy

Finally, in 1951, Bethel invited the first Wuppertal student—Fritz Potreck—to study in Kansas for one year. In 1952, Rudolf Wiemann represented Wuppertal. When Potreck and Wiemann returned to Germany, they shared their enthusiasm for Bethel and the education they received and worked with the Wuppertal faculty to convince the North Rhine-Westphalia Ministry of Education to sponsor an annual exchange program with a student from Bethel.

After only two years of a one-way exchange, 1953 saw the first students who traded countries and schools in the now evolving Wuppertal-Bethel Exchange program: from Wuppertal, Annegret Gehlhoff (Völker), who escaped the Communist East "disguised as a 'subnormal' boy," and Bethel's Otto Driedger, now professor emeritus at the University of Regina's School of Human Justice in Saskatchewan.

Fast's experience, knowledge and connections abroad helped decide which German college should be invited to send a student to study in America.

A legacy of peace born from a time of pain and war

Only six years after the end of World War II, Fritz Potreck initially met Fast at the Frankfurt office of the U.S. High Commissioner in Germany, a transitional government set up by the Allies to supervise the newly established Federal Republic of Germany. Given the horrible experiences of the war and its devastation all over Europe, Potreck saw this opportunity to study in the United States as "a contribution to peace and better understanding between nations after World War II."

Did Fast plan to leave a legacy of bridge-building behind? Her letters and notes reveal there "was no nicely organized, well-coordinated effort to start a project with a future. Rather there was a tenuousness, a groping for something that would

Continued on page 16

Photo supplied

The program initiated by Fast and the Mennonite community continues to build a spirit of peace and understanding between two nations.

Continued from page 15

show the deep caring that [the students at] Bethel College felt as they learned more and more about the terrible aftermath of World War II."

The rest of the story is your story

Since 1951, more than 100 students from both sides of the Atlantic have participated in this educational bridge-building. When asked to reflect on their experiences, almost everyone reported the profound impact the Wuppertal-Bethel exchange program had on their lives.

The participants in this intercontinental exchange have worked in many professions, especially as teachers, social workers and professors. When Wiemann returned to Germany in 1953 and became an English teacher, I was one of his first students. In class, he often talked about his experiences at Bethel, even teaching us the popular midwestern song "Home on the Range." Little did I know that 10 years later, in 1964, I would join the ranks of students representing Wuppertal at Bethel. This year of study abroad profoundly affected my life, an experience I now use to encourage my own students to study different cultures and respect and value difference. In vocations that touch many lives, the participants in the program initiated by Fast and the Mennonite community continue to build a spirit of peace and understanding between two nations.

In 2001, Fast wrote to all the participants: "You have made it work far beyond first expectations and the hopes of those who worked so hard to provide the first financial support for this program." However, unlike Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which ends with the gloomy "the rest is silence," she concluded her letter to the program's alumni on an encouraging note: "The rest of the story is your story."

A young Mennonite woman becomes an ambassador to the world

Though Fast grew up in a Minnesota town of less than 2,000 inhabitants, the little Mennonite girl from the prairie became an international power broker who managed to convince the leading lights in Mennonite circles, the North Rhine-Westphalia educational ministry and the interim government in Germany to support the first postwar German-American exchange program between colleges. The woman who was once denied the role of minister served instead as a cultural and spiritual ambassador between two nations that were at war only a few years earlier.

As a young woman, the denial of her life's ambition caused her great pain. Her education, her clearly demonstrated organizational abilities and her skill in reaching out to people of widely differing backgrounds would have enabled her to become a great minister at any Mennonite church. Instead of building a small congregation at home, however, she created a ministry of peace that reached a worldwide community, shaping countless lives in a legacy of outreach and fellowship that continues to this day.

This remarkable woman clearly helped bring the world together—one pair of students at a time.

Henrik Eger lives in the Philadelphia area and can be reached at eger@aol.com.

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Associated
Mennonite
Biblical
Seminary

AMBS
window

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Jesus makes me laugh

J. Nelson Kraybill, AMBS President

How undignified for a seminary president to end a dozen years in office with high jinks! You may have read about presidential trousers getting soaked by jesters at a farewell banquet, and the subsequent chartering of a MennoPrank Society.

With all the daunting economic and missional agenda in front of the church, shouldn't our leaders be more serious? One brother, in love, even chided that folly is one of the evil intentions of the heart that Jesus lists along with fornication and licentiousness (Mark 7:18-23).

The trouble is, Jesus makes me laugh. A Franciscan friar in hood and robe once told me what he expects will happen when he gets to the gates of heaven: "Saint Peter will stand at a podium next to an *up* elevator and a *down* elevator. He will read from a long list of my sins, then point me toward the *down* elevator. Just as my knees start to buckle, Peter will reach under the podium, pull out a red plastic ball, stick it on his nose, and cry, 'Just kidding!' He will laugh uproariously as he announces that because of Jesus I am forgiven, and grace is sufficient for me to take the *up* elevator."

Jesus makes me laugh.

Just for the record, I underscore that just about anyone trying to run a business or nonprofit this year has had truckloads of sobriety. This is a tough season, and AMBS has had its share of sober meetings. But along with the ache there has been an enormous amount of grace—God's grace—and one evidence of that is laughter.

Jesus' opponents complained that he had too much fun (Mark 2:15-20), and his parables included whimsical twists such as a camel going through the eye of a needle. The road to crucifixion in Jerusalem must have been arduous. But there had to be something exuberant and even playful about a teacher who could turn water into wine, call Herod a fox, and eat a piece of fish to prove he was not a ghost. The resurrection itself is a sort of cosmic prank on the devil, announced to the world by an apostle who called himself a fool for Christ.

There is laughter that is destructive folly—sneering, gloating, or racist jokes, for example. But laughter that Jesus brings reflects the free spirit of people forgiven, the sheer exuberance of being in the arms of a loving God, the release of realizing we don't carry the burden alone. Best of all is laughter at ourselves. That kind of laughter is a little Sabbath, a rest from hard work, a relaxation into grace.

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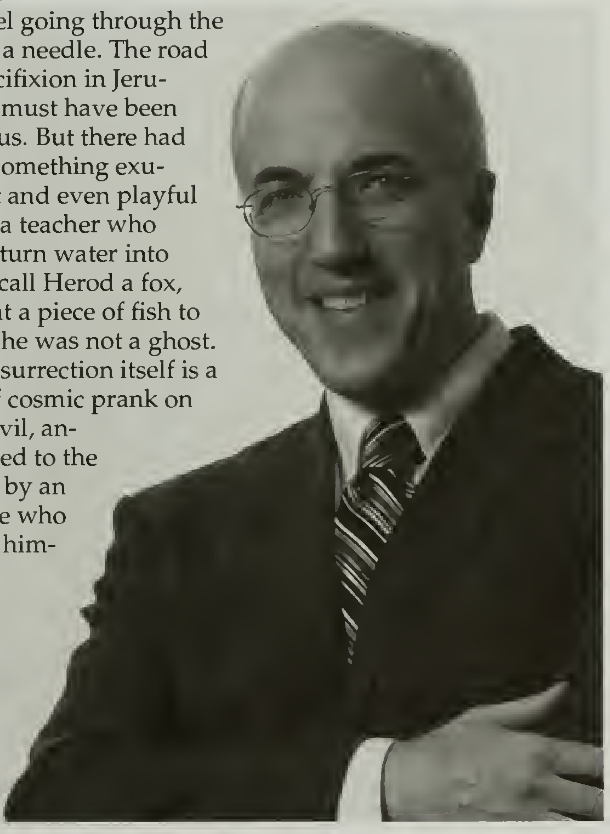
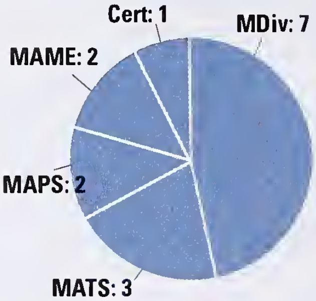


Graduates step into new ministry roles



Fifteen students graduated from AMBS on May 23, 2009. Graduates completed study to receive these degrees:

MDiv	Master of Divinity
MAPS	Master of Arts: Peace Studies
MATS	Master of Arts: Theological Studies
MACF	Master of Arts in Christian Formation
Cert	Certificate in Theological Studies

Devin Cook MDiv Pastor of Liberty Center United Methodist Church, Liberty Center, Ind. Devin and Jennifer, his wife, have three children. He is a member of Osceola United Methodist Church, Osceola, Ind.

Emily Dueck MAPS Will pursue work in the area of peace and social justice issues. Emily is a member of Leamington United Mennonite Church (LUMC), Leamington, Ont.

Suella Gerber MDiv Will be pastor of Fellowship of Hope, Elkhart, Ind. Suella and John Gerber, her husband, have two children, and currently she is a member of Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Joseph Kabui MDiv Will resume his pastoral position at Tigoni Baptist Church, Limuru, Kenya. He also will be involved in training seminars for church leaders in different parts of the country. He and Ruth N. Kamau, his wife, have two children.

Richard Klinedinst MATS with a concentration in theology and ethics Will begin in the Juris Doctor program at Indiana University School of Law in Indianapolis, Ind., this fall. He is a member of North Liberty Church of the Brethren in North Liberty, Ind.

Christina Litwiller MDiv Began as pastor of Salina (Kan.) Mennonite Church

Devin Cook, Emily Dueck, Suella Gerber, Joseph Kabui on May 31. She has been a member of Mennonite Church of Normal, Normal, Ill.

Devon Ezra Miller MATS Will enter the Michigan State University doctoral program in anthropology with the intent of continuing the pursuit of reconciliation between Anabaptists and Native Americans in the Great Lakes region. Devon and Margaret, his wife, have seven children. He is a member of Moorepark Community Church, Three Rivers, Mich.

Lyle G. Miller Cert. Will continue as minister to children at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind. Lyle and Bonnie Miller, his wife, have two sons.

Anne M. Mitchell MDiv Will do Congregationally Supervised Pastoral Education this summer, working part-time as minister of visitation at Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, then complete AMBS studies this fall. Anne and Chet, her husband, have three children.

Charissa (Reece) Retzlaff MDiv Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment. Reece is a member of Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alb.

Jesus makes me laugh

(continued)

"When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion," the Psalmist wrote, "we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter." At AMBS I laugh when we balance the budget (I'm still holding my breath and lying awake this year), when students do biblical storytelling and bring out unexpected nuances, when an international student innocently calls me the "dead duck [lame duck!] president of AMBS."

When I laugh at myself or my circumstances, I remember that salvation belongs to God. I don't have to take myself or my job so seriously. All I have to do is watch for signs of God's redeeming work and find ways to be part of the trajectory of grace.

When hope raises my sights above the daily toil of budgeting and administration at AMBS, I see multiple reasons to celebrate: a new generation of able students with vision for the church; a new professor of missional leadership development; a national award for the AMBS library; good relations between seminary and regional conferences; vibrant spiritual life on campus; a broad donor base; a strong team of faculty, staff and administrators.

As I leave the seminary, I am certain God will call new leaders to AMBS with imagination and ability beyond anything I could muster. All this is God's work, signs of what the Spirit is doing to restore the church and renew the world through Christ. Yes, Jesus makes me laugh. ●

Richard Klinedinst, Christina Litwiller, Devon Miller, Anne Mitchell, Charissa (Reece) Retzlaff. Not pictured: Lyle Miller

Joanna Shenk MATS with concentration in theology and ethics Joanna will work for Mennonite Church USA as Inter-Church Relations Associate and Communications Writer/Research Associate. She is a member of Fellowship of Hope, Elkhart, Ind.

Michael Sherer MATS Will continue in his role as theologically-inclined Information Technology Director and Executive Director of Mennonite.net. Michael and Patsy, his wife, have two daughters. He is a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship, Goshen, Ind.

Tim Stair MAME Will continue working at Mennonite Health Services Alliance and will pursue a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing through Murray State University in Kentucky; and then pursue pastoral ministry and church leadership. Tim and Jan, his wife, have four children. He is a member of College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Rick Stoner (Not pictured) MAME Began June 1 as youth pastor for Bethel Mennonite Church, West Liberty, Ohio. He is married to Jessica Stoner.

Alan Stucky MDiv Began as pastor of Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church, Harper, Kan., in March. Alan is married to Katie Best. ●

Joanna Shenk, Michael Sherer, Tim Stair, Alan Stucky. Not pictured: Rick Stoner

Joseph Kamau Kabui (right) receives the award of excellence in practical theology from Daniel Schipani, professor of pastoral care and counseling. Joseph will return to Kenya to resume his pastoral position at Tigoni Baptist Church in Limuru.

Faculty give awards to graduates

AMBS faculty select students to receive special awards, presenting these at the Dean's Breakfast the day before commencement. This year's awards are as follows:

Devon Miller: John Howard Yoder award for excellence in peace studies

Rick Klinedinst: Marlin E. Miller award for excellence in theological studies

Christina litwiller: Gertrude Roten award for excellence in Greek exegesis

Suella Gerber: Millard Lind award for excellence in Old testament interpretation

Reece Retzlaff: Perry B. Yoder award for excellence in Hebrew Exegesis

Joseph Kamau Kabui: Award for excellence in practical theology ●

The Holy Spirit will be with them, graduates told

Taking a cue from the church calendar which showed eight days until Pentecost, Dorothy Nickel Friesen told graduates that the Holy Spirit will be with them in their ministry.

The John 15:9–17 passage that Dorothy used as the basis for her message at the May 23 service comes within a section in which Jesus is preparing his disciples for his death. The disciples are asking, "Where are you going? Can we go, too? Who will stay with us?"

Dorothy noted that as graduates leave the seminary and move into ministry, they, too, are asking, "Who will stay with us?" She reassured them that as they make hospital visits, wait with grooms as weddings begin, and do other ministry tasks, the Holy Spirit will be with them.

Dorothy noted a variety of ministry concerns highlighted in publications for church leaders, including economic stress, addictions, and the need for the church to involve young people. However, she also noted the signs she sees of new vitality in the church. "I see small group prayer cells, community gardens, and barriers between people slowly giving way and allowing new conversations."

She concluded with the reminder that Jesus called his followers "friends," and added, "God has called you to be salt and light, to be present. God calls you to love one another and to bear fruit."

Rebecca Slough, AMBS academic dean, called the 2009 graduating class small but "mighty," explaining that some students who could have graduated this year decided to continue their studies another year.

Dorothy is conference minister for Western District Conference of Mennonite Church USA. Prior to taking that position in 2003, she was pastor at First Mennonite Church in Bluffton, Ohio; assistant dean and director of continuing education at AMBS; and pastor at Manhattan (Kan.) Mennonite Church. She holds a Master of Divinity degree from Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Mo. ●

Dorothy Nickel Friesen, conference minister for Western District Conference, assured the graduates they were "Chosen by God."

Employees give back to AMBS

When AMBS employees were invited to find ways to address the financial stress of the current climate on the seminary, many responded with an offer to give back part of their earnings for the 2009–2010 year.

"We tried to keep everyone informed about what was needed," Nelson Kraybill, AMBS president, said. "We invited employees to consider giving back to AMBS; it wasn't mandated by the board or administration."

As a result, employees will give a total of $106,000 in salary cuts or payroll contributions in the new fiscal year beginning July 1. This is approximately seven percent of the total amount the seminary needs in contributions for the year.

Nelson said, "This is a signal that AMBS is not expecting everyone else to carry the burden of keeping the seminary strong. We ourselves are ready to sacrifice." He also noted, "Employees of the seminary are already modestly paid, and some could give more than others, depending on their circumstances." This is a one-time effort, Nelson emphasized, not something that will be asked of employees again.

There are several ways the seminary will maintain fiscal health in the next year. "We are not looking to just one source for all of the savings we need," Jeff L. Miller, chief financial officer, said. For example, the board has approved using more estate funds received during the year for annual expenses, temporarily putting less of the estate gifts into endowment or longer-range projects. Where possible, cuts in expenses will be made, and some savings will occur from normal changes in staff and activities for the year.

"The employee gifts are a bright spot in the midst of dark fiscal clouds," Nelson said. "I am grateful to work with colleagues who are that committed to the mission of AMBS." ●

Publications represent faculty scholarship and collaboration

John Rempel, Alan Kreider, Ken Hawkley and Beverly Robinson look over new work by AMBS faculty at the annual event celebration faculty scholarship. John and Alan are members of the teaching faculty, Ken is a development officer and Beverly is a volunteer from Iowa City, Iowa, who spent two weeks at AMBS in May.

The AMBS community gathers each spring to celebrate the writing and publishing completed during the year.

Mary H. Schertz, director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, noted that this year there are numerous examples of faculty-student collaboration among the published materials. These include two books by Daniel Schipani and alumna Leah Dawn Bueckert; a book of essays by students in a class taught by Steve Schweitzer; a book of lectures by John Howard Yoder, edited by Ted Koontz and alumnus Andy Alexis-Baker.

Mary also noted a first on this year's list of faculty work: a DVD by Alan Kreider, "Resident but Alien," a project he did for Youth With a Mission.

"All of these materials represent hours and weeks and months and sometimes years of work—and all are dedicated to the glory of God," Mary concluded.

For the list of new work by faculty or with faculty contributions, see www.ambs.edu/news-and-publications/faculty-scholarship. ●

Nelson Kraybill, AMBS president, thanks Sharon Baker, full-time volunteer and volunteer program coordinator, at a recent AMBS gathering.

Honors for employees

Sharon Baker was honored at the annual AMBS employee recognition event, even though she isn't an employee. As a full-time volunteer for seven years, Sharon has worked for every department and nearly every office on campus. She also has served as hostess for the AMBS Church Leadership Center, welcoming guests to campus.

Sharon will return to her home in Colorado in August. Her legacy will be a strong volunteer program which she initiated. In 2008, 91 volunteers contributed 7,214.25 hours, an equivalent of $140,750 if paid as staff time.

The May 18 recognition event also honored three 20-year employees:

Judy Yoder, receptionist, mail-room coordinator and director of housing;

Rosemary Reschly, executive assistant to the president and dean; and

Don Steider, director of maintenance.

Three faculty members who are leaving AMBS were recognized:

Alan Kreider is retiring after five years of part-time teaching of mission and church history. Alan plans to write and will teach occasional courses.

Arthur Paul Boers, associate professor of pastoral theology, will take the R.J. Bernardo Family Chair of Leadership Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, Ont. He has taught at AMBS for seven years.

Steve Schweitzer, assistant professor of Old Testament, will become dean of Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Ind., after teaching at AMBS for three years. ●

Your gifts at work

Gifts to AMBS provide 45 percent of what we budget each year in income from contributions. This support is invaluable in sustaining not only the educational program, but also all aspects of life and work on the campus. Here some of the ways your gifts are helping AMBS:

All AMBS employees participated in Damascus Road Anti-racism Training, May 27–29. Together faculty and staff examined concepts of racism and white privilege while exploring how AMBS can be more welcoming for people of color.

A continuing education event on June 4, Unmarried Couples Living Together, involved more than 70 participants, working with presenter Irma Fast Dueck from Canadian Mennonite University to consider how pastors can respond to these situations in their congregations.

In celebration of wisdom

The Institute of Mennonite Studies recently published *In celebration of wisdom: Life and meaning in Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes,* a book of essays by students in the 2007 class on Job and Wisdom literature, taught by Steve Schweitzer.

A new lawn mower will double as a snowplow in the winter. Areas of the campus have been seeded in prairie grasses and wildflowers that do not need mowing; however, some parts of the campus still need to be tended. ●

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- **www.ambs.edu**
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- **www.youtube.com/mennoniteseminary**

Panorama

Upcoming events from the AMBS Church Leadership Center

Advanced Spiritual Guidance Seminar
Sept. 2009 to April 2010
(Register by July 15)
Marlene Kropf

Values-Based Leadership Program
Sept. 15–17, 2009,
Feb. 23–25, 2010
At Laurelville Mennonite Church Center

Advent Planner
Oct. 3, 2009
Marlene Kropf

Pastoring those who face financial crisis
Nov. 5, 2009
Lynn A. Miller

Pastors Week
Jan. 25–28, 2010
Theme: Known to us in breaking bread: Hospitality and Mission in Luke's Gospel
Mary H. Schertz

Leadership Clinics
Jan. 25, 2010

Life Flows On: Pastoring Families of Those Who Face Chronic Mental Illness
Gayle Gerber Koontz

Ministry and Money
Beryl Jantzi

Gathering for new pastors
Rebecca Slough, Karen Martens Zimmerly, Linford King

Continuing Education Day for Pastors
Feb. 22, 2010
John Bell

Online Pornography: Ending up someplace we didn't intend to go
June 3, 2010
Keith Graber Miller, Mary Lehman Yoder

See details for all events at www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter

Visit AMBS for the Open House

The fall Open House for people wanting to know more about AMBS is set for Saturday, Nov. 14. Come to sit in on classes, worship in chapel, learn to know students and faculty, and find out about financial aid. See more at www.ambs.edu/open-house.

Be among the first

If you want to be among the first to know whom the board appoints as the new AMBS president, send your e-mail address to Mary E. Klassen: mklassen@ambs.edu.

We will keep your address on file for a special message as soon as the decision is public.

Bassam Bannoura (center), and Hiyam, his wife, were among the alumni who gathered for an annual reunion on May 22–23. Bassam and Hiyam came from their home in Beit Sahour, West Bank, Israel, to join others who graduated in multiples of ten years previously.

The gathering was funded by !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth, as a way to continue building support for the program that encourages young people to consider ministry. Hilary Scarsella, an alumna of !Explore, and Andy Brubacher Kaethler, !Explore director, shared stories about the impact of the program.

Participating alumni also were invited to join in the commencement service and reception on Saturday, May 23. Here Bassam and Hiyam visit with AMBS Professor Gayle Gerber Koontz.

Alumni News

David L. Myers (Master of Divinity 1991) is director of the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives of FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency).

Kay Bontrager-Singer (Master of Divinity student) was ordained June 14 at Faith Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Thomas Meylan (Master of Divinity 1982) has released his second book, "Facing Challenges Whether You Chose Them or Not," designed specifically for people dealing with the effects of the current economic crisis.

Tina Stoltzfus Schlabach (Master of Divinity 2003) is working with others to begin Stephen Ministry at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., where she is a pastor. She has completed the foundational level of a training program in Gestalt Pastoral Care.

Summer 2009
Volume 19 Issue 3

The purpose of *AMBS Window* is to invite readers to call people to leadership ministries, and to provide ways for readers to become involved with AMBS through financial support, prayer support and student recruiting.

Editor: Mary E. Klassen
Designer: Nekeisha Alexis-Baker
Photos: Page 1–Peter Ringenberg; graduate groups–Steve Echols; others–Mary E. Klassen

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Learning thanks in tough economic times

TGIF

JULY 2009
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8 9 10 11
12 13 14 15 16 17 18

by Beryl Jantzi

Friday is that long anticipated sixth day of the week. It signals a transition from the routine of work to the respite of the weekend. It arrives with a predictable dependability in the seven-day cycle we call a week. The 52 weeks of each year are one of several structured cycles with which we govern our lives and count our days. But not all weeks or Fridays are created equal.

Some of the most welcomed and celebrated Fridays include Casual Friday and Good Friday. Each is a window into our human experience.

Good Friday is an annual reminder that evil exists and persists in an imperfect world. Casual Friday celebrates the simple pleasures of being able to wear jeans to work.

And maybe TGIF, the cultural expression associated with Friday, sums it up. Whichever form of Friday we face, we are called to be thankful.

The term TGIF was originated by the Akron, Ohio, disk jockey Jerry Healy on radio station WAKR in the early 1970s. The phrase has also become an advertising and promotional theme as well as the name of a national chain of restaurants. In our current economic downturn we all hope for an upturn in the economy and a return of the laid off to the work force in our communities and congregations. We hope for a turnaround in the global economy, knowing that millions are suffering far worse than we are in the West. What other lessons might we build from the acronym TGIF?

TGIF: Trusting God In spite of Finances

Maybe certain parts of western Christianity have tied financial prosperity too closely to God's primary means of blessing. A theology rooted in monetary wealth and prosperity is suspect, to say the least, as we read the words of the prophets and Jesus. We may do well to encourage our members to count the blessings in their life that are depreciation-proof. Consider all the blessings not linked to the human manipulation of stocks and bonds and Wall Street insider activity.

TGIF: Truly Generous, Intentionally Faithful

Who of us can say we have ever given until it hurts—sacrificial giving like the Macedonians described in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5. Who of us can count on more than one hand or finger, times we have given sacrificially to help another, not knowing if our own needs would be met in return. The worst response this current economic situation can do to us is to cause us to hoard and neglect those hurting far more than ourselves. Maybe others have made bad choices, and are paying for those decisions now. But their fear and pain is real, and God calls us to be generous and demonstrate trust and faith that God will provide for us even as we share with others.

TGIF: Thank God It's Family time

Since budgets are tight, let's return to the idea of the church as an important center of not only our spiritual life but our social circle. How about reclaiming one night of the week as family night—with our nuclear family or church family. Why not popcorn and a movie hosted in our homes or at church. Since $9 for a movie ticket was never good stewardship anyhow, why not combine relaxing entertainment with Christian fellowship: Friday night pot lucks, dessert buffets and table games with children, youth and adults all together. In recent years many of us have gone from meeting three times a week as church families to barely one. One night per week to reconnect with brothers and sisters may be just what the Scriptures ordered (Hebrews 10:25) and what tight economics dictate. We have become increasingly disconnected with ever-intensive schedules and growing affluence. Thank God it's never too late to reclaim former values and practices.

There is much to learn in each day and experience that comes our way.

Tony Campolo made famous the phrase "It's Friday But Sunday's A Comin'." In this sermon Campolo reflects on the lessons of an African-American pastor, who reminds his congregation that God will have his day. Good Friday will pass, and Easter Sunday will lay claim to the hope of the resurrection, which cannot and will not experience depreciation or foreclosure.

I'm looking forward to Sunday—to an upturn in the lives of people who have lost homes and jobs and a sense of peace concerning the future. But I don't want to rush through the lessons of Friday too quickly. There is much to learn of our God and ourselves in each day and experience that comes our way. Thank God for all Fridays—the Good and the Casual.

Beryl Jantzi, Harrisonburg Va., is stewardship education director at Mennonite Mutual Aid.

Mennonites and governmental politics

Caryl M. Guth is a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

When our youth several years ago made use of the initials WWJD*, maybe we should have seized the moment to lead them into the 21st century instead of letting the initials be turned into T-shirts, bracelets or necklaces. Our youth were perhaps expressing our theology better than we do and in a more up-to-date form.

Realizing the danger of oversimplification, we present some Anabaptist givens: Anabaptist theology begins and remains centered in community and discipleship, always. The framework is, first, the words, example and Spirit of Jesus; second, the writings of the Apostles in the rest of the New Testament; third, the Old Testament; fourth, the experience of the first and second-century church; fifth, our 16th-century Anabaptist experience of attempting to recover the substance and spirit of early Christianity; and, finally, applying our Christian heritage to the current milieu in which we find ourselves.

We don't live in an empire controlled by the Romans, the English, the Nazis or the Stalinists. We live in a democracy that may give us the freedom of choice and action our God so values. Consequently, in our time, fulfilling our understanding of discipleship includes participating nonviolently in civic affairs. Jesus would approve, since he himself engaged the powers in his day.

> **In our time, fulfilling our understanding of discipleship includes participating nonviolently in civic affairs.**

Mennonites have taken one of three or more approaches to civil politics. We jump in as the world does, in a partisan way. Or we become fundamentalist and participate like dogmatists. Or we remain "pure" and don't vote at all. Certain Mennonite thought leaders who have questioned becoming active in politics, even recommending taking a sabbatical from politics, might instead be inferring that we need to learn to politic in a WWJD way.

Historically, Mennonites are not known to be skilled in the art of governmental politics, given our inexperience. Maybe we need to go to summer camp, to use a football analogy, and practice, practice, practice. For our obligation to serve Christ includes the political perspective in confronting the powers, just as it includes the dynamic of love for one another and self-examination within the confines of a close spiritual community.

In a time of war, terrorism, imperialism, economic greed and materialism, our world, our country and our town need our service.

Perhaps our scholars, leaders, ministers and indeed all of us need to develop some guidelines for political participation. Here are some suggestions in this regard:

1. Keep in mind WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?).
2. Expect full and equal participation for all members-in-the-faith—and all others as well—accepting each person where he or she is at the moment.
3. Consciously practice self-reflection and encourage others to do so as well.
4. Realize that winning is not everything—there dare be no compromise in the essential message.
5. Demand good stewardship in politics and government especially because it's not "their" money, and "they" are affecting everyone's freedom and well-being.
6. Emphasize the realities of sharing, peace and love, being aware of the pitfalls in the belief that "more is better than less," of "winning at all costs" and considering "my interests first."

The above points are simply food for thought.

Now the challenge—if not now, when? If not WWJD, what?

*WWJD is the acronym for: What would Jesus do?

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Convention 2009 in Columbus, Ohio**

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of *The Mennonite*, the board for The Mennonite, Inc., or Mennonite Church USA.

Mennonite Central Committee's 'new wine'

With revised structure, agency seeks closer partnerships with global churches.

During Mennonite Central Committee's most extensive review in 30 years, leaders asked big questions, such as, Who is the keeper of the MCC soul? To find the answers, they convened 60 meetings, involving more than 2,000 people from 50 countries over 18 months.

The result was a plan for change in an agency that elder historian and former MCC worker Robert Kreider on June 6 called "one of the most beloved of all programs that our people have."

The changes—approved by the MCC binational board, which met June 5-6 at Hillsboro (Kan.) Mennonite Brethren Church—aim to clarify MCC's vision, simplify its structure and make it a closer partner with Anabaptist churches around the world.

The meeting brought near to an end a process MCC called "New Wine, New Wineskins." The review sought to prescribe a structure ("wineskin") and define a vision ("wine") for a future of emerging global equality rather than North American domination.

The plan calls for restructuring MCC into a system of interdependent national or multinational agencies. It redefines MCC as "a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches," expanding upon MCC's definition as a ministry of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in Canada and the United States.

"We have worldwide program, but we don't have worldwide ownership," said John Stoesz, executive director of MCC Central States. "This opens up those possibilities."

Participants described the board's approval of the "New Wine, New Wineskins" document as "momentous" and "historic." It had been finalized the day before at a summit of 96 people representing MCC boards and supporting denominations.

The plan calls for ending MCC binational, the part of MCC that administers a $36.7 million budget for ministries in 65 countries. International programs would be transferred to MCC U.S., MCC Canada and Anabaptist service agencies in other countries.

Replacing MCC binational would be a new central office that would lead the entire system of MCC organizations—which currently include the U.S. and Canadian national MCCs, plus four U.S. regions and five Canadian provinces.

"There is no center right now in the MCC system," said executive director Arli Klassen. "We have a cumbersome decision-making process among 12 boards that has become almost paralyzing."

Klassen estimated a new central office, probably not in the United States, could be established in three to five years. She said summit participants did not discuss possible locations. MCC binational is in Akron, Pa., where MCC U.S. is based as well.

One of the few expressions of dissent came from board member Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, who disagreed with the plan to transfer international program to the U.S. and Canada.

International program "requires a structure and entity of its own," she said. "It should be kept apart, not placed with any [country]."

The long-term goal is for national or multinational entities to manage programs within their own regions. This also could ease the dissatisfaction Canadians feel about the centralization of international programs at the binational office in Akron.

"Canadian constituents in particular have felt that international program has been run from a U.S. perspective," Klassen said.

The vision for making MCC a more global entity includes building a closer relationship with Mennonite World Conference. This has been evolving for several years. In 2006, MWC and MCC representatives called for a global service forum. The "Wineskins" document affirms a forum to coordinate global Anabaptist service programs.

MCC also aims to solidify its relationship with the global church by endorsing a statement of "shared convictions" adopted by the MWC General Council in 2006. That statement lists seven beliefs that unite Anabaptist churches around the world.

MCC wants a closer relationship with all its supporting churches, leaders said.

"The churches feel they don't have enough say in what MCC is doing," Klassen said. "That's churches all over the world, not just North America. We needed to find a way to be more responsive."

The "Wineskins" document identifies MCC's priorities as justice and peacebuilding, disaster relief and sustainable community development.

And the soul of MCC? It's "the people who are making quilts, canning meat, volunteering at thrift shops," said Phil Rush, resource generation director. "It's inspiring to know that we have that level of grassroots support."

A task force will meet in September to work out details of the "Wineskins" plan and then submit it to the 12 MCC boards for approval.—*Paul Schrag for Meetinghouse*

> There is no center right now in the MCC system. We have a cumbersome decision-making process among 12 boards that has become almost paralyzing.
> —Arli Klassen

Correction to the June 16 issue, page 19: The Danzig church books were returned to Germany.

Clarification: The Danzig congregation was not defunct at the time of its decimation in 1945.

Ed Diller is the new MC USA moderator

Says, 'It is important that … alignment continue at all levels of church.'

At the conclusion of the June 30-July 5 Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 in Columbus, Ohio, Cincinnati attorney Ed Diller (pictured at right) begins his two-year term as moderator of our denomination. At the outset of this leadership responsibility, I interviewed Ed by email.—*Everett J. Thomas*

As you anticipate the next two years leading Mennonite Church USA, what will be your greatest challenges? What will be your greatest opportunities?

There will be many challenges and opportunities, each goes with the other. As a denomination we are often leery of the world around us, many times for good reason.

Yet it is important that we are fully immersed in this world and that we invite those with whom we live and whom we serve to be part of our communities of witness. We must continually ask ourselves, How can we be the missional church that discerns where God is already working in the world and joins in that work? and, How can we invite others to fully participate in our discerning and serving bodies? This will stretch us individually, as congregations and as a denomination. However, only by making progress in both areas will we have the opportunity to move beyond our limited understanding and experience of God's work into the life, witness and service to which we are called.

We know that many of our young adults and youth are networking in all sorts of ways beyond our own church culture. As a denomination we need to understand those new relationships and how they impact us.

Despite our passivity, new groups and new people are approaching our denomination desirous of walking together.

What are the trajectories established by former moderator Sharon Waltner and the Executive Board during the past biennium that you see as most important to continue?

I should first say how much I have enjoyed my two years on the Executive Board and working with Sharon. The work has been both challenging and invigorating.

During these past two years, there has been increased emphasis on listening to all levels of the church, candidly assessing the progress toward our denominational vision, purpose and priorities and taking specific action to achieve greater movement toward bringing God's healing and hope to the world. It is important that this work at alignment continue at all levels of the church.

Photo provided

What are the things about Mennonite Church USA that give you the most hope?

As a people we are extraordinarily blessed by our collective Vision: Healing and Hope. All of us should be able to recite that by memory. I also am inspired by the spirit, passion and commitment of our members, both old and new. It is impossible to travel the length and breadth of this land and not be awed by our people—who we are and who we are becoming with the grace and help of God. Finally, the hope of our denomination has to be the presence of God in our midst and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

What are the things about Mennonite Church USA that give you the most concern?

My largest concerns relate to the possibility that we will become a people of God who are static and withdrawn. Instead we must joyfully and boldly expand our witness and be active and visible in the world, both near and far.

We must also act in ways that invite others to join in the work. Despite our passivity, new groups and new people are approaching our denomination desirous of walking together. What a wonderful affirmation of the Vision: Healing and Hope. During this time, we must find renewed strength and courage to be open to and seek out those who are called to that vision.

Together we can more effectively join in God's redemptive work in the world with joy and expectation.

Executive Leadership sees staff changes

Six individuals in Mennonite Church USA leadership will transition this year.

Six individuals plan to leave Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership this year. In October 2008, executive director **James Schrag** announced his plans to retire in November after 36 years of ministry. From August until November, Schrag will begin a writing project on the history of the process that transformed General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church into Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. Schrag served as project director for the transformation team and then in 2001 began serving as Mennonite Church USA's executive director.

Associate executive director **Ron Byler** will also leave Executive Leadership this year. Byler will begin serving as interim executive director on Aug. 1 and serve in that role until a new executive director is in place—likely later in 2009. Byler began his work with the Mennonite Church General Board as associate general secretary in June 1997. He continued as the associate executive director of Mennonite Church USA when it was officially formed in 2002. Earlier he worked for Mennonite Media from 1979 to 1991.

"The formation years of Mennonite Church USA have been tumultuous times," Byler says. "I am moved by the persistence and faithfulness of the Executive Board and Executive Leadership staff to move us to a place where we can better respond to God's call for us. I am looking forward to taking a number of months off after I finish my work for Mennonite Church USA and before I begin a new assignment. I am not sure what God has in store for me next, but I assume it will be in some area of nonprofit management."

Director of convention planning **Jorge Vallejos** has planned his final Mennonite Church USA convention. He plans to leave his position after Convention 2009, with his final day sometime at the end of August. Vallejos began working for the Mennonite Board of Missions in 1996 and then began working for Mennonite Church USA shortly after the 2001 convention. Associate director Rachel Swartzendruber Miller will move into the director role.

"Working in convention planning has been a wonderful learning experience," Vallejos says. "I've had the opportunity to plan events that affect the entire church. I continue to believe that conventions are the number one identity builder in our church." Vallejos says he understands that some people value conventions less than others, but he hopes that instead of doing away with conventions the church will offer alternatives with a similar positive impact.

"Conventions are especially important to our young people," he says. "We lose so many of them that I think the time and money invested is worth it because conventions are invitational and life-giving."

Vallejos, who lost his mother to cancer this year, says that before she died, she expressed hope that he continue working for the church. "I believe that people who are at that stage have clarity about life," he says. "Therefore I would like to continue working for the church in a different capacity."

Identity director **Marathana Prothro** will resign from her role sometime after Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009. Prothro served with Executive Leadership for four years. Prothro will begin a graduate assistantship in August with Wichita State University, where she has been attending part-time since 2006. She will finish a master's degree in communication in May 2010.

"I have been given opportunities to grow professionally and develop leadership skills that I would not have had in other organizations and businesses," Prothro says. "I'm going to miss my coworkers and colleagues and being a part of things happening churchwide. ... However, it's the time in my life where I need to explore this [academic] path. It still allows me to be rooted in the community I live in and congregation I attend."

Director of intercultural relations **Iris de León-Hartshorn** will transition to a position in a Mennonite Church USA area conference. In September, she will begin serving as executive conference minister for Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference after her last day with Executive Leadership on Aug. 14. De León-Hartshorn, her husband, Leo Hartshorn, and their grandson, plan to move to the Portland area in August.

After dedicating 21 years to her job, administrative assistant for the communications office **Jo-Ann Schmidt** plans to take early retirement this year, with her last day scheduled for July 31. Schmidt will eventually move to Ontario, where her children and grandchildren live, but for now she will continue living in Newton, Kan. "The communications office has been a wonderful, exciting and challenging place to work," Schmidt wrote in her resignation letter. "There have been a few setbacks, but in spite of these, the office has always offered much-needed guidance to Mennonite Church USA, and I feel it is an integral part in promoting our vision and goals."—*Anna Groff*

James Schrag

Ron Byler

Jorge Vallejos

Marathana Prothro

Iris de León Hartshorn

Jo-Ann Schmidt

Young adult interest in service spikes

Voluntary Service programs receive more applications in past several years.

Dear Mom, You're Ruining My Life
Jean Van Leeuwen
San Miguel

Cara Rufenacht

Chicago Mennonite Voluntary Service worker Jenny Fast (in the black shirt) working as a librarian in the San Miguel School. She is pictured here with Ariel Harris.

Mennonite mission agencies are watching the applications for voluntary service programs continue to grow this year.

Both executive director of Mennonite Mission Network Stanley Green and executive director of Virginia Mennonite Missions (VMM) Loren Horst say the increased interest of young adults in voluntary service began before the economic recession.

"We are musing that young adults, in addition to dealing with the economic woes," Green says, "are interested in making a difference in the world."

Applications for all Mennonite Mission Network programs have been on the rise since 2006, says Del Hershberger, director of Christian Service for Mennonite Mission Network.

But yearlong programs experienced a significant boost in applications for the 2009-2010 year.

Yearlong service programs include Radical Journey, Dwell, Mennonite Voluntary Service and Service Adventure.

There are more people than money. It's a challenge but an exciting one.—Loren Horst

Hershberger says he is pleased with the number of young adults committing a year or more of their life to service.

"In some programs we have quite a few more people … than we have space available," he says.

One way Mennonite Mission Network responded to this increased interest was launching a new MVS unit in Madison, Wis.

An ongoing challenge is balancing the number of applicants with the number of host churches.

"It doesn't serve anyone well to have houses that only have one or two volunteers in them," Hershberger says.

VMM's yearlong internship program for young adults, tranSend, received more applicants this year than ever before.

Perhaps people who have always wanted to do voluntary service see now as a good time, Horst says.

Retirees are driving the rise in another category of service works. While not directly correlated to the recession, Horst says he notices this trend.

"Everyone would have to acknowledge that war and the response to war was a motivating factor," Horst says, adding that the context does not detract from the integrity of the service.

"There are more people than money. It's a challenge, but an exciting one. … These economizing times can be good for us, too."

Like VMM's tranSend program, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has received more applications for young adult programs than in previous years.

"When a nation faces economic hardship or war or other significant difficulties," says Chris Landes, director of MCC's young adult programs, "that is also an opportunity for both our nation and our churches to promote sacrifice, service and civic engagement."

These MCC young adult programs include the Service and Learning Together (SALT) program, Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network (YAMEN!) and International Volunteer Exchange Program, as well as the new two-year Seed Program that brings together a global group of young adults for service, education and advocacy.

MCC received more than 140 applicants for the SALT program this year, and about half of those applicants came from constituent churches.

"Budget cuts within MCC have made it difficult for us to provide all the placement assignments we would have liked," he says.

Ryan Showalter, director of Eastern Mennonite Missions' discipleship ministries department, says EMM no longer offers a voluntary service program. The YES program began in the early 1980s and steadily outgrew the VS program until VS closed in 1998.

Now EMM short-term workers raise their own support, and Showalter cited a decrease in numbers of applicants to these programs.

He says the economic climate could play a role in this decrease, as participants find raising money more challenging this year than in previous years.

—Anna Groff

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

New DOOR opens for Atlanta Dwellers

Dwell 'cementing its presence' by purchasing a home in Capitol View area.

Tents may be temporary, but one group of tentmakers are staking their ministry in Atlanta long term.

Home ownership and local young adults committed to service are opening the Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection program onto new thresholds. Buying a house is a first for the DOOR program and represents its commitment to being a sustained presence in Atlanta. The DOOR house will join the existing Dwell house, rented from Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship, in Atlanta's Grant Park neighborhood in hosting yearlong Dwell volunteers.

DOOR, one of Mennonite Mission Network's Christian service programs, offers a variety of short-term urban service experiences for groups and individuals. Dwell is DOOR's yearlong service program for young adults in the city.

In Atlanta, the Dwell program has taken a different shape than in other locations. While participants come to the program from around the country to volunteer, the Atlanta Dwell house this year hosts five "tentmakers" from the Atlanta area.

"In Atlanta we've seen a lot of interest in people living in intentional community, possibly stemming some from the popularity of writers such as Shane Claiborne," says Jannan Thomas, DOOR Atlanta city director, who lives in the Capitol View neighborhood, where the new home is located. "And this experience is so valuable because it allows you to integrate spiritual disciplines into your regular life."

These young adults hold paying jobs and have chosen to live together in intentional Christian community and minister in their home area. Together, members of the Dwell house pray together and study topics such as classism, racism and gentrification. Dwellers also work to undergird work that is ongoing throughout the city and in their neighborhood.

"We're not just putting volunteers into a needy neighborhood," says Thomas. "We're asking them to learn about assets-based community development and to learn what the biblical call to be a neighbor means."

Dwell is cementing its presence in the city by buying a house in Capitol View, a diverse area experiencing a shift in population. Many of the homes in the neighborhood are in foreclosure, and the Capitol View zip code has the highest rate of mortgage fraud in the country. The availability of inexpensive housing has led to an influx of new, middle-class neighbors and the area is beginning to experience gentrification. Capitol View is also a historic area with a large, effective neighborhood association and has a tradition of regular neighborhood potluck meals and boasts several active congregations.

Cara Rufenacht

DOOR's Dwell house in Atlanta gathers for house dinner. From left are Jannan Thomas, Amy Anderson, Aline Talmage and Josh Peck.

"I went through a phase where I was critical of gentrification, but I've come to see it as inevitable. So, like with all of life, I think we need to find a way to do something beautiful with it and bring people along," says Troy Bronsink, DOOR board member, who lives in and pastors an emergent congregation in Capitol View. "I'm a big proponent of intentional neighboring."

Atlanta Dwellers have each committed to spending time volunteering and connecting with the neighborhood.

"It's a special thing to be living with a group of committed Christians ... but it's nice to have the flexibility to do work outside the community, too," says Dwell participant Alan Jenkins, who started an environmental justice ministry within the Presbyterian church.

The Dwellers' initiatives include helping start a community garden, mentoring students at a local school and providing graphic design and Web services for small church agencies and nonprofit organizations that could not otherwise afford them.

"I've realized that living alone wasn't for me, and this community has fed my soul. And not only that, we're a wonderful extension of each other's ministries," says Tom Livengood, a Dwell participant who has helped to initiate and lead the Living Room Fellowship, an emergent group that meets down the road from the current Dwell house.

The new house in the Capitol View neighborhood will serve as yet another extension of Dwell's ministries. Volunteers, board members and people from the neighborhood are helping renovate the house for use in the fall.—*Hannah Heinzekehr of Mennonite Mission Network*

Church giving to Mennonite colleges up

Matching tuition grant support rises while annual fund donations are down.

When Sarah Pohl left home last fall for her first year at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., she took along well wishes from her home congregation.

She took a financial gift, too. Like the three others from her church who are attending Mennonite colleges and universities this year, Sarah received generous financial support from a church family that believes in Mennonite higher education.

Last year alone, Sarah's 160-member congregation, First Mennonite Church of Christian in Moundridge, Kan., paid out $14,750 to Mennonite colleges/universities for tuition grants for its own students.

The church also gave $3,800 in offerings to two of Mennonite Church USA's undergraduate institutions. Similar giving stretches back to 1975, when the church first offered tuition grants to its students attending Bethel College.

Since then it has supported about 40 First Mennonite students at four of the five colleges/universities.

"Churches are giving a lot to their students so they can go to Mennonite colleges, and for that we are most grateful," says Carlos Romero, Mennonite Education Agency executive director. "We say thank you for their support, not only in sending students but in giving offerings to the colleges."

Last year, total giving from Mennonite Church USA churches to Bethel College, Bluffton (Ohio) University, Goshen (Ind.) College, Hesston (Kan.) College and Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., equaled $3.45 million.

This is up 14 percent from 10 years ago. Total giving of congregations to colleges/universities was $3.03 million in 1999.

In the same time, however, church giving to operational funds of the five Mennonite colleges /universities has dropped nearly 52 percent.

In 1999, congregational giving to annual funds at the five institutions came in at $1.45 million. Last year annual fund contributions totaled only $956,420.

While eager to help their own students, some Mennonite Church USA congregations have reduced their offerings to the institutions' operational budgets.

"What a challenge this has created for our Mennonite colleges and universities!" Romero says. "We need congregations to assess their total giving to Mennonite education."

The trend mimics giving in other settings.

"It's a general pattern in giving that we see outside the church as well. People like to connect a face with where their money is going," Romero says, "They like to give to designated projects. When that happens continually in our colleges, they can be put in a serious bind.

"Perhaps unknowingly, our churches have been excusing themselves from yearly giving to the annual funds at the colleges/universities," Romero says. "Earlier generations seemed to have a higher sense of loyalty to the institutions."

[People] like to give to designated projects. When that happens continually in our colleges, they can be put in a serious bind.—Carlos Romero

Romero gives this example: One year your church has three students at Mennonite Church USA colleges/universities. The church gives each a $2,000 tuition grant for a total of $6,000.

Suddenly the three students graduate, and the next year your church has no students at any of the institutions. In the habit of supporting the colleges/universities through student grants, your church zeroes out the tuition grant for that year.

So suddenly there is no money going from your church to the institutions for their annual funds, which ironically have a portion allocated to the congregational Matching Grant Program.

A common Matching Grant Program is followed by each Mennonite Church USA college/university. It matches the first $1,000 of congregational student aid dollar-for-dollar.

Beyond $1,000 from the congregation, the colleges and universities provide $1 of matching aid for every $4 provided, up to full tuition.

Last year 1,504 students at the five colleges/universities were from Mennonite Church USA churches.

Many received some amount of matching grant from their congregations.

As the colleges/universities begin their new fiscal year in July and look toward the fall semester, Romero calls on Mennonite Church USA congregations to evaluate their giving patterns.—*June Galle Krehbiel*

Mennonite higher education facts:

• During the 2008-2009 school year, the five Mennonite colleges and universities had 3,328 Mennonite students. This number includes 89 racial-ethnic Mennonite students.

• In the last six years, enrollment of Mennonite students at higher education institutions has held steady.

• There are more than 75 programs of study at the colleges and universities.—*Carlos Romero*

Mennonite, Shiite scholars meet in Iran

Seventeen scholars find similarities and differences in faith, peace perspectives.

Photo provided

The group of Mennonite and Shiite scholars in Qom, Iran.

Seventeen Mennonite Christian and Shiite Muslim scholars of religion met together for four days in Qom, Iran, to discuss the themes of peace and justice.

The Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute hosted the May 24-27 conference. Mennonite Central Committee organized the Mennonite side. This conference, the fourth in a series that began in 2002, grew out of an exchange program between MCC and IKERI in which Iranian doctoral students study at the Toronto School of Theology, and Mennonite couples from North America live and study in Qom.

The Mennonite delegation extended an invitation to a fifth dialogue to be held somewhere in North America in 2011.

Participants presented papers rooted in their own tradition's theological understanding of the nature, mandate and implications of peace and justice. Formal and informal discussions followed.

The Mennonites presented papers on biblical perspectives, the centrality of Jesus for peace and justice, pacifism, church, martyrdom, advocacy and the history of Mennonite practices of peace and justice.

Shiite presentations examined the relationship between justice and peace in the Qur'an, war and jihad, eschatology, divine mercy, and the nature of the international political order.

The relationship between justice and peace emerged as a key theme of the conference. In his opening lecture, Ayatollah Rajabi explained that, in Islam, justice is an absolute requirement while peace is conditional upon justice.

While peaceful means are ideal, he said, violence may be required when justice is violated, the innocent are attacked or people are prevented from worshiping God.

"It seemed we were trying to ask them if there were moments in the Qur'an or Islam that could resource faithful yet nonviolent responses to injustice," said Susan Kennel Harrison, "while they were demanding us to be more realistic about all the ways they saw war or self-defense justified within our own texts."

Mennonites and Shiites share perspectives and experiences. For example, both sides agreed that the human pursuit of justice and peace ought to be rooted in God's justice and God's peace. Both have a future-oriented hope for justice to be fully realized upon the return of Jesus and/or the 12th Imam. Both are minority groups within Christianity and Islam and have experienced persecution that shapes their perceptions.

Gordon Zerbe, a first-time participant, notes how the Shiites have a religious imperative to dialogue because of what Islam holds in common with Christianity. At times there was a remarkable similarity in theological language and concerns. Yet some conversations made evident significant differences in culture, context and patterns of thinking.

"This dialogue required me to contemplate some foundational assumptions of my own faith," he said. "We often take the logic of our own convictions for granted until we explain it to someone who has a different frame of reference."

A difference emerged in the discussion of how to move from sacred text to contemporary context. One Mennonite scholar argued that the social location of the interpreter or the community of interpretation will partly shape what peace or justice looks like in practice.

A Shiite scholar countered that the meaning of the Qur'an is always clear; perspective should not affect its meaning.

The Mennonites who presented papers were A. James Reimer and Jeremy Bergen of Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.; Harry Huebner and Gordon Zerbe of Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Man.; Susan Kennel Harrison of the Toronto School of Theology; Wilma Bailey of Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, and David Shenk of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

Henry Paetkau and Nathan Funk of Conrad Grebel University College, and Jon Hoover of the Near East School of Theology in Beirut participated as official observers.—*Jeremy Bergen*

Urban church energized to fight poverty

Forty Mennonites attend Sojourner's Mobilization to End Poverty conference.

Greta Brackman

From left: Rochele Beachy, Sylvia Docking, Sacara Martin, Marita Beachy, Al Anthony, Orene Anthony, Lee Bradley, Antonio Ewell and Crandall Millder were part of the Lee Heights group.

A recent Mobilization to End Poverty conference hosted by Sojourners in Washington surprised Al Anthony of Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland with a level of passion and commitment he didn't expect.

Anthony, a longtime member of the multiracial Mennonite congregation, has attended many issue-oriented conferences—but none quite like this one. As usual, it provided a folder of colorful handouts and a roster of great speakers. But it also flooded his heart with something much bigger and stronger than he'd ever experienced.

"We are a demographically diverse congregation, and there are people in poverty in our church, so the issue is not new to us," Anthony said. "But we were energized by the new solidarity we felt from many others."

Mennonite Church USA is making sure that congregations such as Lee Heights aren't alone. The denomination, with Mennonite Central Committee East Coast and MCC U.S.—Outreach Partners that helped plan and support the event—jointly provided $3,000 in scholarships for student/young adult and racial-ethnic participants to attend the conference held April 26-29.

Anthony and 13 others from Lee Heights joined the 1,200 participants from 44 states and 24 denominations, as well as from several other countries.

At least 40 Mennonites, including the Lee Heights group, participated from across Mennonite Church USA. Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach, director of the MCC Washington office, hosted the Mennonites for a gathering during the conference to share their reflections and their hope. "This is an example of how interchurch collaboration is happening on many levels—in the denomination, in area conferences and in congregations," said André Gingerich Stoner, Mennonite Church USA's director of interchurch relations. "Lee Heights really took the lead and showed us how congregations can tackle these issues on the local level."

Ohio Conference, one of Mennonite Church USA's 21 area conferences, is also a big reason why Lee Heights has new hope. In March 2008, the Lee Heights conference attendees proposed a resolution to work to reduce poverty, which was adopted by the conference. Crandall Miller and Nathan Beachy of Lee Heights helped form a Resource Team to Reduce Poverty to create initiatives that stem from that resolution. Miller, who had received training as a Sojourner's "Windchanger," put his new skills to use in forming that team.

"The Windchanger term was born from [Sojourners' leader] Jim Wallis' belief that elected officials always have their finger in the air to test the wind and see which way it's blowing," Miller said. "The way we create change is by letting them know what matters to us and what we need them to do. He references how the Civil Rights movement began in southern churches and then became a groundswell, from which legislation arose."

Tackling poverty in our neighborhoods as well as in our nation is part of the new groundswell Mennonites are increasingly joining, said Rochele Beachy, Lee Heights, conference attendee and member of the conference's poverty team. For example, the Lee Heights conference participants will do worship services on poverty in their congregation and in several others this summer. They will also help Lee Heights engage in community gardening, adding that ministry to the longtime Hunger Center ministry they've funded.

"Mennonites have generally done better with the overseas thing, and a lot of rural churches love to come to the city and do service," said Beachy. "But it is really hard for people to engage with this issue unless it directly impacts them. We are realizing that we do not have to be one paycheck away from poverty ourselves to be passionate about economic justice."

Conference participants passionately engaged leaders on the issues during Capitol Hill Day. That's when participants visited their congressional and Senate legislators and shared their concerns about poverty. Statistics show that 82 Senators and 210 Representatives received visits.—*Laurie Oswald Robinson*

FOR THE RECORD

WORKERS

Bontrager, Nicole, Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., recently graduated from Bluffton University and began a Mennonite Voluntary Service assignment to LaJara, Colo., in June.

Conrad, Susan L., was ordained as associate pastor at East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster Pa., on May 16

Hostetler, Bruce, was licensed and installed as full-time interim lead pastor at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan., on May 31.

Herr, Eric D., was licensed as youth pastor at Willow Street Mennonite Church, Willow Street, Pa., on May 31.

Jantzi, Denton, was installed as part-time interim associate pastor at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan., May 31.

Kurtz, Marilyn E., was ordained as lead pastor at Rossmere Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on May 31.

Lehman, Todd, was licensed by South Central Mennonite Conference for specific ministry as campus pastor at Hesston (Kan.) College and installed at Hesston Mennonite Church on June 14.

Longenecker, Thomas William Leard, transferred from Pacific SW Church of the Brethren to Lancaster (Pa.) Conference to serve as lead pastor at New Hope Community Church, Harrisburg, Pa., on May 14.

Mentzer, Mark W., resigned from a youth pastor assignment at Willow Street Mennonite Church, Willow Street, Pa., on June 1

Ranck, Dawn, associate pastor of Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa., will join a team of peacemakers for two weeks in July traveling to the Middle East.

Smith, Alexis J., was ordained at Greensboro Mennonite Fellowship, Greensboro, N.C., on May 31, for chaplaincy ministry in the Eastern Carolina District of Virginia Mennonite Conference. She is employed as a chaplain at the Moses Cone Health System in Greensboro.

Stevens, Benjamin C. and Hyacinth A., were licensed as co-pastors at King of Glory Tabernacle, Bronx, N.Y., on May 3.

Stillman, Roger "Bud," moved from associate to lead pastor at Living Stones Fellowship, Peach Bottom, Pa., on April 19.

Troyer, Janice, was ordained as a member of the pastoral team at Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on April 19.

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PENNSYLVANIA to EUROPE (June 19-July 2)
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EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN SHARP (June 29-July 12)
ITALY, AUSTRIA and GERMANY (July 7-17)
ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (July 23-August 4)
SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29-August 11)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (September 5-18)
THE ROAD to JERUSALEM (September 11-22)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE for GERMAN-SPEAKING PERSONS (September 16-29)
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BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Berg, Juliana Lan, May 22, to Alfredo and Elizabeth Douple Berg, Ephrata, Pa.

Goshow, Spencer David, June 2, to Christopher and Kristie Willmott Goshow, Dubai, U.A.E.

Hoffman, Madalyn Grace, June 14, to Tom and Stephanie Klassen Hoffman, Lincoln, Neb.

Hummel, Riley Dean Nicholas, June 2, to Beau and Nicole Osborne Hummel, Berlin, Ohio.

Jones, Aiden Liam Andrew, June 4, to Will and Amy Jones, Goshen, Ind.

Kaufman-Wall, Mabel Virginia, May 1, to John Kaufman and Karin Kaufman Wall, North Newton, Kan.

Kirkton, Josiah James, May 13, to Jonathan and Lisa Kirkton, Middlebury, Ind.

Moyer-Groff, Miriam, June 10, to Jamey and Gen Moyer Groff, Harrisonburg, Va.

Muth, Jessi Jill, June 1, to Douglas and Charity Stahl Muth, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Ressler, Elijah Alan, May 27, to Derek and Sarah Barth Ressler, South Bend, Ind.

Riegsecker, Brady Scott, May 11, to Jason and Erika McSorley Riegsecker, Middlebury, Ind.

Skogerboe, Esther Wulf, June 13, to Noah and Cori Wulf Skogerboe, Minneapolis, Minn.

Thiessen, Ella Rosa, May 18, to Jake and Lindsey Dreiling Thiessen, Buhler, Kan.

MARRIAGES

Boese/Horst: Debbie Boese, Harrisonburg, Va., and Mark Horst, Harrisonburg, May 16, Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va.

Dick/Harder: Jacob A. Dick, Mountain Lake, Minn., and Bessie M. Harder, Mountain Lake, June 12, at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake.

Eby/Schlabach: Kevin Eby, Harrisonburg, Va., and Kara Schlabach, Harrisonburg, May 30, at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville.

Erb/Schweitzer: Veronica Erb, Harrisonburg, Va., and Justin Schweitzer, Harrisonburg, Va., May 2, at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va.

Friesen/Johnson: Garrett Friesen, Henderson, Neb., and Jenna Johnson, Hastings, Neb., June 6, at First United Methodist Church, Hastings.

Friesen/Sawatzky: Scott Friesen, Altona, Manitoba, and Kendra Sawatzky, Steinbach, Manitoba, June 6, at Steinbach Mennonite Church.

Friesen/Stewart: Ryan Friesen, Henderson, Neb., and Nicole Stewart, Lincoln, Neb., June 6, at St. Nark's Methodist Church, Lincoln.

"For the Record" is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. To submit information, log on to www.TheMennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access our online forms. You can also submit information by email, fax or mail:

•Editor@TheMennonite.org

•fax 574-535-6050

•1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

Glather/Quiring: Hanna Glather, Stella, Neb., and Ryan Quiring, Henderson, Neb., June 13, at Geo. Spencer Vineyard, Gibbon, Neb.

Graber/Roth: Karen Graber, Hurley, S.D., and Adam Roth, Akron, Pa., June 20, at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Henderson/Immel: Jillian Henderson, Lansdale, Pa., and Kendrick Immel, Sellersville, Pa., June 20, at Grace Mennonite Church, Lansdale.

Henderson/Jones: Anna Henderson, Broadway, Va., and Joe Jones, Linville, Va., May 29, at Soundfront on Hatteras Island, Frisco, N.C.

Hershberger/Karlen: Evan Hershberger, Sugarcreek, Ohio, and Kassi Karlen, Louisville, Ohio, June 13, at Science Hill Community Church, Alliance, Ohio.

Linscheid/Janzen: Robin Linscheid, Fresno, Calif., and Chris Janzen, Fresno, June 13, at Mennonite Community Church/Camp Keola, Huntington Lake, Calif.

Martin/Smucker: Michael Martin, Middlebury, Ind., and Leslee Smucker, Goshen, Ind., May 24, at First Mennonite Church, Middlebury.

Maund/Reiff: Corinne Maund, Lansdale, Pa., and Mark Reiff, Lansdale, May 13, at Zion Mennonite Church, Souderton, Pa.

Oswald/Wiens: Nate Oswald, Hutchinson, Kan., and Tara Wiens, Buhler, Kan., June 13, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

Sandberg/Yoder: Dan Sandberg, Harrisonburg, Va., and Megan Yoder, Harrisonburg, June 2, at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va.

Schroeder/Williams: Jeremy Schroeder, Inman, Kan., and Kathleen Williams, Gilbert, Ariz., June 5, in Flagstaff, Ariz.

DEATHS

Beck, John L., 75, Canfield, Ohio, died May 30 of complications of cancer. Spouse: Dorothy M. Lehman Beck. Parents: Floyd and Marietta Little Beck. Children: Lee, Mark; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 3 at Midway Mennonite Church, Columbiana, Ohio.

Kulp, Henry Derstein, 91, Souderton, Pa., died June 3 of a cerebrovascular accident. Spouse: Sara Halteman Kulp. Parents: John L. and Katie H. Derstein Kulp. Children: Sam, Gerald, Jacob; 10 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 6 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.

Marczuk, John K., 87, Harleysville, Pa., died June 4. Spouse: Ruth A. Moyer Marczuk. Parents: Jacob and Ahafia Kostrubiak Marczuk. Children: Beverly A. Mackaman, Cynthia D. Marczuk, J. Stephen, Amy McCouch; four grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 8 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville.

Mast, Ralph, 88, Goshen, Ind., died April 10. Spouse: Ellen Rose Mast. Parents: Elijah and Ella Good Mast. Children: Linda Farmwald, Alice Jane Gesse; six grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 14 at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Kouts, Ind.

Nuttall, James David, 58, Frazer, Pa., died May 30 of a heart attack. Spouse: Kathleen Ann Frederick Nuttall. Parents: James Kershaw Nuttall and Jean Mary Williams Nuttall. Children: Andrew Janes, Sarah Jean Nuttall. Funeral: June 5 at Frazer Mennonite Church.

Richard, Phil L., 56, Hesston, Kan., died June 7. Spouse: Sandi K. McLaughlin Richard. Parents: Elmer J. and Eunice M. Amstutz Richard. Funeral: June 10 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Snyder, Donald F., 89, Goshen, Ind., died June 5. Spouse: Annabelle Christophel Snyder. Parents: Tom and Margaret Knoll Snyder. Funeral: June 8 at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Witmer, Brenda F. Winn, 51, Chambersburg, Pa., died June 5 of cancer. Spouse: Rick E. Witmer. Parents: Dorothy Brindle Winn. Children: Jaclyn Witmer, Melissa Witmer. Funeral: June 9 at Marion Mennonite Church, Chambersburg.

Zimmerly, Dorothy J., 72, Wooster, Ohio, died June 6. Spouse: Glenn E. Zimmerly (deceased). Children: Jonathan Robinson, Joshua Robinson; two grandchildren. Funeral: June 21 at Orrville Mennonite Church, Orrville, Ohio.

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Zion Mennonite Church, located in Archbold, Ohio, seeks candidates for the position of ***lead pastor***. Our intergenerational congregation has an average attendance of 275 members. The preferred candidate will have a strong commitment to the Anabaptist/Mennonite faith and will strive to provide spiritual growth to the congregation and church community. The successful candidate will possess gifts in preaching, teaching and pastoral care, and church administration. The lead pastor will engage positively across all generations. Previous experience in a pastoral leadership position and a Master of Divinity degree are preferred. Direct inquiries and resumés to: Phil Rich, Chairperson of Search Committee, 1201 Lindau St., Archbold, OH 43502, or email prich@richford.tv.

Mountain View Mennonite Church, N.C., www.mtviewmennonitechurch.wordpress.com, is looking for a ***3/4-time ministry associate to work with young adults and youth*** beginning fall 2009. For complete job details, contact Dave Hartzler, mennodave@gmail.com; 828-461-1151.

The **Gather 'Round** curriculum, a project of **Mennonite Publishing Network and Brethren Press**, is accepting applications for the following positions:

Managing editor. Full-time. Copy edits and proofreads; manages curriculum production process; secures and maintains contracts and permissions. Must have excellent editorial and computer technology skills and superior ability to organize projects and manage details. Must operate well in a collaborative environment. Must be well-grounded in Mennonite or Church of the Brethren beliefs and practices. Marketing experience a plus. Bachelor's degree required; graduate degree in related field preferred. Location: Open (Elgin, Ill., preferred). Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until position is filled. Start date: Aug. 17, 2009, or earlier.

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Interested people may view the full position descriptions at http://www.gatherround.org/contactus.html. Send letter of application and resumé to: Anna Speicher, Project Director and Senior Editor, Gather 'Round Curriculum, at gatherround@brethren.org or 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120.

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Complex inter-religious dynamics

Gerald Shenk teaches at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va., and works with an Abrahamic initiative for faith-centered peacebuilders at Eastern Mennonite University.

Real families in our community (and in yours, no doubt) are picking up streams of wisdom, cultural practices and strands of diverse faith traditions that rarely intertwined with such intensity at the local level until recent times. Some people have the zeal of converts, turning away from paths that no longer nurtured them in vital faith, placing their trust in Jesus Christ and eagerly sharing this witness with others. Some move in other directions, treating familiar Christian pathways as passé, more fascinated by exotic elements elsewhere.

In my boyhood rural church community, someone who married a person outside our circle of Mennonites (a Methodist or Catholic), was regarded as having left the faith. Now within a five-mile radius from our home in a fairly conventional small-town corner of U.S. society, real families are engaging the complexities of world religions and some of the powerful forces of emergent global culture. One household blends Brethren, Buddhist and Quaker wisdom. A recent wedding brought together traditions of Japanese, Latin American and more recent Mennonite congregational cultures. An Iranian peacebuilder spoke with moving tribute at the Eastern Mennonite University graduation in Harrisonburg, Va., combining the regalia of her academic achievement at a Christian university and the artful veil of her Persian Islamic heritage. Another calls herself a Muslim-Mennonite.

Previous generations had to venture halfway around the world to encounter lively communities of other faiths in vivid splendor. Now the temple on the other side of town may well be Hindu; the latest storefront group may be Buddhist. The upcoming wedding in the neighborhood may be partly Jewish, partly Caribbean, partly Greek.

The children on the school bus may speak Farsi or Kurdish or Armenian at home. The corner convenience store sprouts language and garb from India or Jordan or Iraq.

The faith of our neighbors, our colleagues at work, even our children and their children, has become more colorful and variegated than anyone in days of yore might have imagined. These traditions can challenge us, provoke discernment and pose new questions to ponder. They may also have aspects we can learn from, calling us to deepen our own faith understandings and commitments.

As families deal with this complexity of religious pluralism and our young adults explore it, we will all need to work on fresh theological understanding to engage these dynamics. Students shaped in this new environment pose new kinds of questions to our heritage as followers of Jesus. It has become important in this cultural context to meet the challenge to frame faith and seek understanding amid the realities of religious pluralism with clarity, gentleness and respect. Pastors, teachers and parents alike must do new homework to be honest in our witness. Staying true to who we are must also involve paying careful attention to the truth of who others are.

Our neighbors in a multifaith context will need to know we do not teach contempt for their traditions. They will wonder whether we can sustain our peaceable witness amid the clamor of competing worldviews without caving in to the fears and suspicions preached by strident voices in popular culture. They will also want to count on the same disarming approach that has served Mennonites well in crossing many divides, moving toward conflict zones in the confidence that the God we serve is larger than our human fears and insecurities.

It is the God we know in Jesus Christ where we put our ultimate trust, where we find our true security. From that steady place we can welcome the wonderful array of diverse peoples God is bringing together in our families and communities.

In that welcome, what new, fascinating truths will we learn about God, ourselves and how God has been at work in many cultures and religions? The biblical vision gives us a glimpse of God drawing all people together: "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb … saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!' " (Revelation 7:9ff.).

Years after the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001, my students researched the experience of Muslim neighbors in our community and learned of a memory many found moving. Amid the fears that stirred many local Muslims and their neighbors, some feared going out in public visibly identified as Muslim. Women wearing traditional garb were reluctant even to shop for groceries. But some of them hit on a solution. Some miles into the countryside surrounding our minor city they found the food supplies they needed at a rural store serving the Old Order Mennonite community.

Offering shelter, safety and respect to each other across divisions and distress in the wider society is a mark of God's people at work in a complex, multifaith world. For more and more of us, this happens not only in distant countries but in our own families and neighborhoods.

Continued from page 5

my book *If I Were Starting My Ministry Again* (1995) that if I were starting again and wanted a growing congregation I would go with a church planting begun with a vision for outreach.—*John M. Drescher, Quakertown, Pa.*

Pedophile objects to being called a liar

I've never read one of your magazines before until June 13, and I must say that the letter to the editor from William Hartwell (Readers Say, May 19) made me furious. The letter was about sex offenders, and it specifically dealt with pedophiles. He said that all pedophiles are liars and are not to be trusted. This was said right after he said that he led over 500 sex offenders to Christ.

I am a pedophile and a Christian. Not only was I outraged by this article but also at the lack of godly values and standards that the writer violated by categorizing all of us with his narrow-minded outlook. Yes, a sex offender is plagued with a disease—a serious and deeply rooted one at that. Does our disease make all of us liars? No, it does not.

As with any disease or addiction, we need to learn to control it and not be controlled by it. For all addictions, such as alcoholism, gambling, shoplifting and, yes, pedophilia, there is no cure. But there is control. That control comes from understanding why it happens, acknowledging that we have a deeply rooted problem and yielding it to a higher power. That power is God.

I have found God, and he is my truth. I do not want to remain in prison, and I can promise you my criminal days are over for good because I've seen hell: It's a seven-by-12-block cell.—*Robert Revels, Carlisle, Ind.*

Waltner led a good process

Thanks for Sharon Waltner's reflections on changes experienced in Mennonite Church USA during the last two years ("Waltner Completes Two-Year Term as Mennonite Church USA Moderator," June 16). Waltner led a good process. Although I was less than enthusiastic with the one-board idea, the new initiatives of greater shared vision and cooperation among agency directors is a clear winning card out of the process.

I smiled as I viewed the picture of Waltner standing ankle-deep in manure. Hopefully, Waltner will have memories of being moderator that are more than forking "crap" the last two years. —*Warren L. Tyson, Brownstown, Pa.*

RESOURCES

The Economics of Honor: Biblical Reflections on Money and Property by Roelf Haan (Eerdmans, 2008, $15) critiques the assumptions that underlie our current economic system and makes a case for a biblical alternative.

Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology by Michael J. Gorman (Eerdmans, 2008, $24) argues that cruciformity is, at its heart, theoformity—what the Christian tradition has called thosis or participation in the life of God.

The Radical Bible, compiled by Kevin Ahern (Orbis, 2009, $12), collects radical verses from the Bible in a pocket format.

Living Beyond War: A Citizen's Guide by Winslow Myers (Orbis, 2009, $16) shows that the notion that war remains a reasonable solution to the conflicts on our planet is truly unrealistic.

The Wanderers by Henry A. Garon (Orbis, 2009, $16) reflects on people experiencing homelessness and poverty—the outcasts of society—and helps readers understand the potential in all human beings to teach us something about the world and ourselves.

Justpeace Ethics: A Guide to Restorative Justice and Peacebuilding by Jarem Sawatsky (The Lutterworth Press, 2009, $42.50) identifies components of a justpeace imagination, the basis of alternative ethics, where the end is touched with each step.

Mennonite in a Little Black Dress: A Memoir of Going Home by Rhoda Janzen (Henry Holt and Company, 2009, $22) is about a woman who returns to her quirky, close-knit Mennonite family to recuperate from a bad breakup.

Building Bridges: Meditations by Wilmer Martin (Mastof Press, 2009, $16.95 from TourMagination, 800-565-0451) connects stories from Martin's early life on a Mennonite farm in Pennsylvania to lessons learned from traveling and leading tours to 70 countries around the world.

First Be Reconciled: Challenging Christians in the Courts by Richard P. Church (Herald Press, 2009, $19.99) seeks to recover the church as a unique reconciled body in a world of enmity, particularly by civil litigation.

The Rising of Bread for the World: An Outcry of Citizens Against Hunger by Arthur Simon (Paulist Press, 2009, $16.95) is an autobiographical account of the launching and development of the nation's foremost citizen's movement against hunger.

Christian Attitudes to War, Peace and Revolution by John Howard Yoder, edited by Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (Brazos Press, 2009, $34.99), makes Yoder's insights more accessible to a broader audience and contributes to ongoing discussions concerning the history, theology and ethics of war and peace.

He Flew Too High: A Novel by Ken Yoder Reed (WinePress Publishing, 2009, $21.99) looks at Reed's own childhood in a Mennonite family in the 1950s and creates a realistic story that explores religious extremism and its effect on a community.

Imminent Domain: The Story of the Kingdom of God and Its Celebration by Ben Witherington III (Eerdmans, 2008, $12) asks how the church should celebrate the coming of the kingdom of God and discusses both the present and future dimensions of the kingdom, bringing out the implications of kingdom thinking for theology, ethics and worship.

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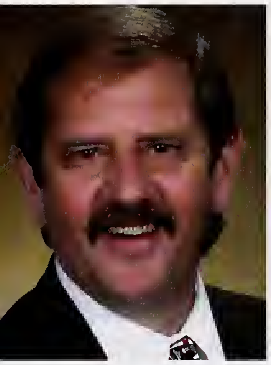

Everett J. Thomas

Mennonite (de)Central Committee

And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.—Mark 2:22

Mennonite Central Committee has been using Jesus' saying about new wineskins as the metaphor for a massive reorganization process. But for those who quilt the quilts, collect the pennies and sell sausage at annual MCC relief sales, the emerging structures (wineskins) are not of primary concern. Those who work in MCC's thrift stores or make financial contributions care only that MCC continue its ministries of justice and peace building, disaster response and sustainable community development.

But MCC has a conundrum: Having decided to "decentralize," the organization still needs a strong center to run its international programs.

In his coverage of MCC's annual sessions June 5-6, Meetinghouse reporter Paul Schrag reports (page 19) that the new structure is designed to "clarify MCC's vision, simplify its structure and make it a closer partner with Anabaptist churches around the world."

This all sounds positive enough. The change is one some MCC board members called "momentous" and "historic." If that is the case, we must take notice of what is changing.

MCC wishes to decentralize, but it needs a strong center to manage its important international programs.

The historic nature of this change is described by this sentence: MCC is redefined as a "worldwide ministry of the Anabaptist churches" which expands upon MCC's longtime definition as a ministry of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in Canada and the United States (from a June 9 MCC news release).

The MCC phenomenon—that grew out of convictions among U.S. Mennonites in the 1920s—has now spilled over the national boundaries in North America. Mennonite Central Committee will no longer be "binational" (United States and Canada). Furthermore, it will no longer define its constituency as Mennonite and Brethren in Christ. Now its constituency will be any interested Anabaptist churches around the world.

The intent is clear: Let Anabaptist churches in each country or continent create a relief and service agency in ways that have integrity within their cultures, contexts and convictions. These expressions will then be coordinated by some sort of centralized structure. But the shape of that central structure (the wineskin that holds the new wine) has not yet been determined.

This is where MCC has a problem: It wishes to allow multiple MCCs around the world, but it needs a strong center to manage its most important ministries, the international programs.

One MCC board member pointed out the problem at the June 5-6 meeting.

International program "requires a structure and entity of its own," said Elizabeth Soto Albrecht. "It should be kept apart, not placed with any [country MCC]."

The International Program Department runs a variety of sophisticated programs, and some of those programs are in countries without Mennonite or Anabaptist constituencies large enough to manage them. It is primarily these international programs—the old wine—that won't fit into the new wineskin being created.

So in addition to creating fresh wineskins (structures) for the new ministries (wine) that are emerging around the world, MCC needs to care for the current structures that provide stewardship for the aged and valuable wine.

The quilters, penny collectors and thrift shop customers care primarily that contributions feed the hungry "in the name of Christ." But when this most beloved ministry makes such a historic change, we all need to understand what it means so we can continue to have confidence in it.

The next step for the organization is to work out the details for the new structure. That is scheduled for September. MCC has listened well to people around the world. Now it needs to figure out how to save the old wine.—*ejt*

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The Mennonite

July 21, 2009

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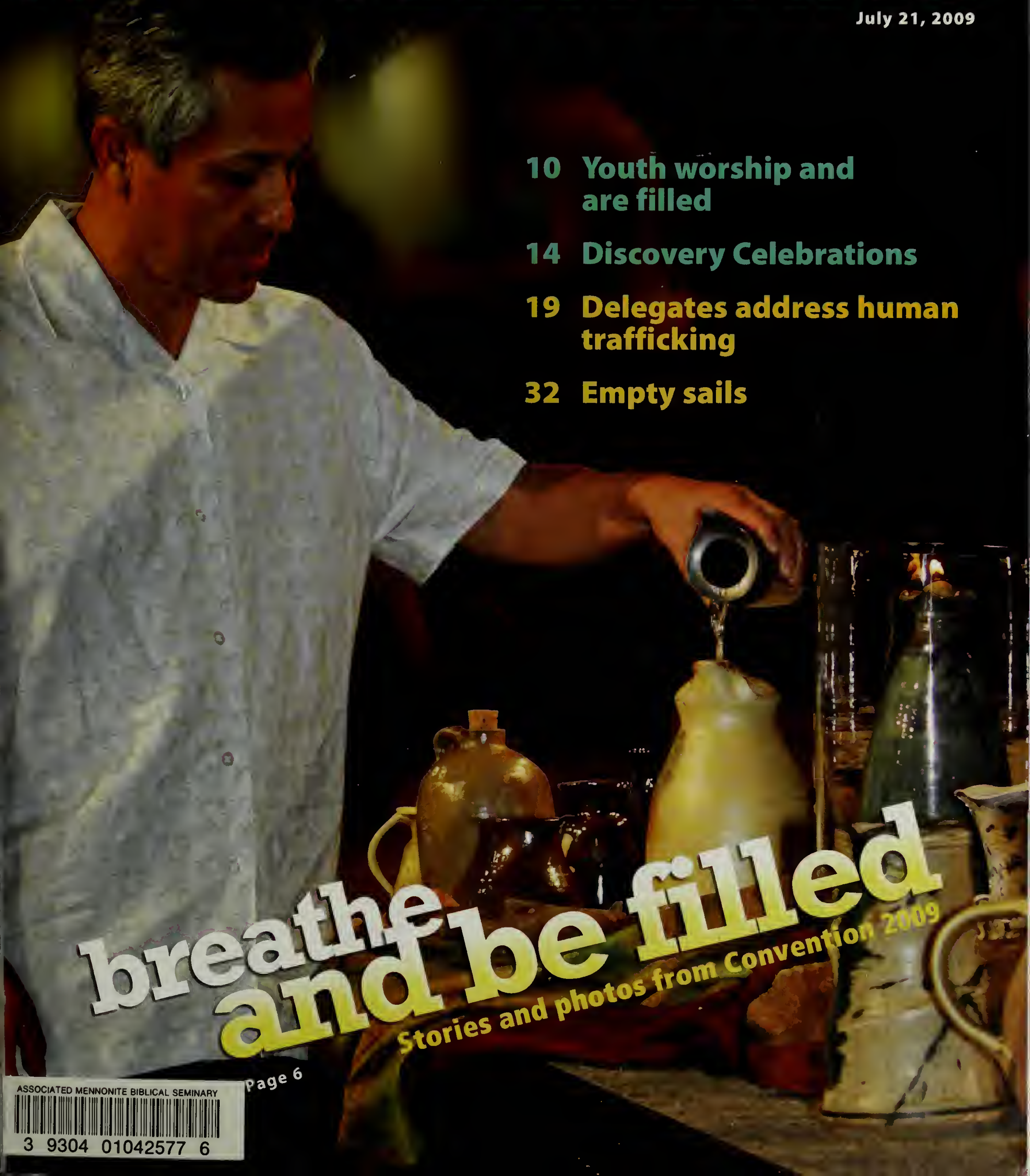

breathe and be filled

Stories and photos from Convention 2009

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Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009

More than 7,500 people participated in the June 30-July 5 gathering for Mennonite Church USA members in Columbus, Ohio (see box). The event, dubbed Convention 2009 by Executive Leadership, was designed as multiple conventions happening conjointly with one joint worship service on July 2.

These disparate venues provided distinctly different experiences for each group. Furthermore, participants in any one of the venues would have had different experiences from others in the same venue. So it is not possible to publish a convention issue that is representative of any one person's experiences. Instead, this issue of *The Mennonite* is intended for the 90 percent of our readers not at Convention 2009. It is our attempt to capture the activities, emotions and achievements of the week.

By the numbers

2,536 adults
4,200 youth and sponsors
268 volunteers
271 junior youth
175 children
61 preschoolers
47 infants
Total: 7,558

The largest contingent at Convention 2009 were the 4,200 youth and sponsors who participated in the youth convention (page 10). In many ways, it is this critical mass of participants that determines the kind of facilities needed for Mennonite Church USA's biennial gathering. As usual, the youth worship services were filled with high-octane energy, powerful preaching and inspired singing.

The business of the denomination happened at Delegate Assembly (page 19). New to this year's assembly was a Dwelling in the Word discipline each morning that culminated in some unprecedented communal hermeneutics around the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus in Luke 19.

During the delegate sessions, several speakers noted that it has been 10 years since Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church delegates voted to create Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. As executive director Jim Schrag said in his July 1 sermon at the adult worship service, it is now time for Mennonite Church USA to unfurl its sails and let God's Spirit fill them (pages 8 and 32).

The church's responses to leaders and congregations not in compliance with our teachings on human sexuality generated two sidebar actions during the week. Three pastors who helped draft an "Open Letter" (see News Digest, April 7) met with the Executive Board on June 30 and asked for a change in denominational polity (page 23). The most visible—and provocative—action, however, came from a group of activists whose "pink Menno campaign" drew reporters from Fox News and Associated Press (page 25).

In these pages we have attempted to provide a sketch of the gathering, primarily for those who did not attend. By the time you read this issue, your congregation may have already received reports from the youth, adults and children from your congregation who participated. We hope the overview we provide here can serve as a context for their experiences.

We also hope this issue will spark interest in the next biennial convention. It will be held July 4-9, 2011, in Pittsburgh. It may tell us whether our sails have been filled.—*Editor*

Mennonite Church USA convention attendance

San José 2007	6,299
Charlotte 2005	7,875
Atlanta 2003	7,956

TheMennonite

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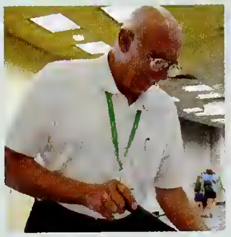
Cover: During the opening worship at Convention 2009, Illinois Mennonite Conference moderator Roy Jimenez adds oil from his conference to a supply that would keep the lamp burning through the week. Photo by Everett Thomas

IN BRIEF



Mike Yoder/mPress

Miller solves nametag problem

When the difference of ½ by ¾ inches from name tag to name tag holder came to convention planners' attention, Roland Miller from Newton, Kan., came to the rescue. A member of the Executive Leadership staff, Miller heard about the oversized name tags and volunteered his services with a paper cutter. Miller plans to retire from EL on Sept. 1. He was a CFO at Prairie View in Kansas for 10 years. He and his wife run a bed and breakfast, where they charge $10/night/person and encourage patrons to make a donation to a variety of charities. His goal for retirement is to continue volunteering in other areas and spend more time with grandchildren. "EL is a great team to work with," he said. "I've enjoyed every bit of it."—*Abri Houser for* mPress, *Anna Groff*

Old and young attend

The oldest and youngest Mennonites at the convention were nine decades apart. The oldest, Paul Peachey of Harrisonburg, Va., turned 90 last October. The youngest, Samuel Hart of Ada, Ohio, was 16 days old on July 4.—*Becca Kraybill for* mPress

Witness with houses calls for economic justice

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Outside the convention center on July 2, demonstrators worked together to construct two cardboard houses—one on sand, the other on rocks. This peace witness, "Rebuilding on the Rock," hosted by the Peace and Justice Support Network, was a "call to the church to reconsider the economy" in light of the Matthew 7 parable.

Melonie Buller of Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church said the witness is part of the local "Building Responsibility Equity and Dignity," which works at local issues; this year's issue is foreclosures and the economy.—*Anna Groff*

Volunteers build shell for MDS house

Youth groups and congregations helped Mennonite Disaster Service build a house that will go to Kristy Barnes, a single mother with three children whose house in Delisle, Miss., was destroyed during Hurricane Katrina.

About 10 percent of the house was built at the convention. Group volunteers worked with six skilled workers—who devoted the whole week to the house—to build its shell. The shell of the house was completed on July 3. It was disassembled after a dedication on Saturday and sent to Mississippi.—*Tyler Falk for* mPress

Anna Groff

Young adults practice healing touch

Katie Boyts, massage therapist from Portland, Ore., demonstrates a massage technique on Jill Swiers during a young adult activity on June 30. Boyts led Chinese massage techniques and explained her interest in bodywork and trauma healing.—*Anna Groff*

Mennonites want to sing, books sales show

WATERLOO, Ont.—Canadian Mennonites are thinking about a flu pandemic, American Mennonites want to sing. At least, that's one conclusion that can be drawn from the Mennonite Publishing Network book sales at the Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA conventions. The top two books sold in June in Saskatoon, Sask., at the MC Canada convention were *Don't Be Afraid* and *Beyond Our Fears*, both of which deal with preparing for a pandemic and other natural disasters. The top two at the MC USA convention in July in Columbus, Ohio, were used copies of *Hymnal: A Worship Book* and the new book *Words for Worship 2*.—*Mennonite Publishing Network*

Mennonite connection aids deaf Olympian

In late March, John Beechy received a text from his daughter Kelli, 28, who was lying along the side of the Appalachian Trail. On the trail, she held a note that read: "I am sick. I need help getting to town." Not only was Kelli Beechy a long way from her home in Salem, Ore., but the situation was further complicated because she is deaf. It did not take long before a fellow hiker came to Beechy's aid and helped her to a hostel, where she recovered quickly and returned to the trail.

However, on Mother's Day, Kelli, who is also a world-class soccer player, fell ill once again and was taken to an emergency room in Pearisburg, Va. Alerted to his daughter's condition by another text, John Beechy Googled for Mennonite churches in the area. Leslie Horning, the pastor of Christiansburg Mennonite Church, a half hour away, readily agreed to help. Horning took Kelli home to his family; she stayed the night and soon left for her home. John Beechy and Leslie Horning met for the first time at the convention in Columbus. "We shared an intense moment," Beechy said.

"As a Mennonite follower of Jesus, that's just what we do," said Horning. "The Mennonite connection was just the icing on the cake."—*Brandon Long for* mPress

Overheard at Convention 2009:

Humorous: A woman at the Max & Erma breakfast buffet: "Someone took part of the cereal from one of the little cereal boxes and put the box back on the rack. Must be a Mennonite."

Serious: "Christians in the global South fit other things around church; those in the North fit church around other things."

Mennonite Mission Food Network

Anna Groff

ennonite Mission 'Food' Network showcases curry
June 30, Mennonite Mission Network hosted a cooking ow at their exhibit. Jeanette Krabill (left) and Stanley Green ve the curry. Marlene Kroeker is in the center.—*Anna Groff*

Five youth invite homeless people to dinner

Five young Mennonites invited three guests who live under the railroad tracks to dine at a Greek restaurant with them on July 3. After hearing speaker Shane Claiborne's call (page 12) to seek out the "many Calcuttas" around them, these Indiana youth visited the homeless people living under the railroad tracks near a hotel. They invited three people to dinner: Drake, Woody and Patty. The youth were Niles Graber-Miller of Goshen; John Swartley, Elkhart; Karsten Hess, Goshen; Robert Heydon, Elkhart; and Aaron Kauffman, Goshen. "[Drake and Woody] chose this lifestyle," said Heydon. "They didn't own any possessions and didn't hold on to stuff."

Although Drake and Woody chose their lifestyle, "they had had some painful circumstances," said Mark Fromer, a youth sponsor at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind. —*Laura Schlabach for* mPress

Living landscape grows at Convention 2009

A maple tree grew in the middle of the exhibit hall. Eventually, that tree will be planted outside the Adriel School, a child welfare school in West Liberty, Ohio. The landscape display included butterfly bushes, rose bushes and 12 rocking chairs. The Communications Reference Council provided funds for the living landscape.

"We're trying to bring a sense of cohesiveness. We should be more about relationships than organizations," said Ken Gingerich, art director for Executive Leadership, as well as bring about environmental awareness. "The idea of using a living landscape seemed to resonate with the convention theme. Trees are life-giving, oxygen-producing and sheltering."—*Laura Schlabach for* mPress

Blood donors earn invitation to return

As the successful two-day blood drive ended, the donor recruitment representative for downtown Columbus had one wish: "I want them to come back in two years," Norma Wasserstrom said of the Mennonites gathered for the convention. The drive boasted 62 productive donations on July 1 and 55 on July 2.—*Abri Houser for* mPress

—*compiled by Anna Groff*

Anna Groff

Anna Groff

vary Community Church, Lee Heights Community Church stomp teams perform in arena
stomp teams performed in the Nationwide Arena after worship on July 4. From Calvary Community Church (left), npton, Va., is Julika Cuffy (left), Amber DuBose and Tre' Mason. From the Lee Heights Community Church group (on t) is Travis Johnson (left), Yazmine Reid, Darlene Johnson and Olen L. Bradley III.—*Anna Groff*

IN BRIEF

Women connect

After the Mennonite Women USA July dinner with the theme "Kitchen Table Theology," Carla Crosby, a server for the dinner, told director Rhoda Keener, "You all wear Jesus well." She said she enjoyed the dinner and the discussion. She also commended the youth at Convention for their politeness. "I gave her a *Timbrel*, and she asked for two copies," said Keener. *—MW USA*

PJSN gives two peace awards

The Peace and Justice Support Network awarded the Peace Pitcher to Titus Peachey and Linda Gehman Peachey of Lancaster, Pa. Together they have nearly four decades of peace and justice work behind them. They both work for Mennonite Central Committee. The first-time Peace Drum award went to Laura Bowman of Archbold, Ohio, as a youth who "marches to the beat of a different drummer" and moves to the "rhythms of peace." Bowman has led peace vigils, organized recycling projects and more. *—Mennonite Mission Network*

Thousands of Mennonites fill Nationwide Arena July 2 for a joint worship at Convention 2009 in Columbus, Ohio.

Filled with

Adults hear calls to gather in God's Spirit and be restored, empowered, centered and sent.

by Gordon Houser

Meeting June 30-July 5 in Columbus, Ohio, under the theme "Breathe and Be Filled," participants in Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 heard calls to encounter God's Spirit. A variety of speakers at worship sessions addressed convention-goers with messages about gathering in God's Spirit and being restored, empowered, centered and sent out.

The opening worship on June 30 focused on the theme "Gathered in God's Spirit." Juana Nuñez told the gathering that the Spirit that was present at creation and in Jesus' life and ministry is the same Spirit present with us today.

Nuñez, a certified part-time chaplain with Marketplace Chaplains USA and moderator of Iglesia Menonita Hispana, presented her message in Spanish, while her daughter Alexandra Nuñez translated.

When Jesus came among the disciples after his resurrec-

the Spirit

Everett Thomas

tion (John 20:19b-21), his presence calmed their fears, and he breathed on them. Then at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-11), the Spirit came in fire and wind upon the newborn church. "The Spirit that initiated Jesus' mission," she said, "is the same Spirit that initiated the mission of the church."

With the power of that same Spirit, the church today is called to practice mission, Nuñez said. "Mennonite Church USA has been greatly blessed, and we are to bless others," she said. The method used by God to change the world has not changed, she said. The key is to spread the good news of Jesus.

Nuñez, the first woman to be elected as moderator of Iglesia Menonita Hispana, is also co-pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Ebenezer in Apopka, Fla., with

Continued on page 8

"Mennonite Church USA has been greatly blessed, and we are to bless others."—Juana Nuñez

"This is a time to unfurl our sails to catch the wind of God."—Jim Schrag

"The gospel spreads best through fascination."
—Shane Claiborne

"The Spirit cannot do its help without our help."—June Alliman Yoder and Mandy Yode Schrock

Continued from page 7

her husband, Eligio. Nuñez was born in the Dominican Republic, while her daughter was born in the United States.

Worship leaders Regina Shands Stoltzfus and Joel Miller invited a representative from each of the 21 area conferences in Mennonite Church USA to bring a vessel of oil and pour some of it into a single vessel at the front (see cover), where an oil lamp burned. Miller called the lamp a reminder of the one Spirit in the church.

At the morning worship on July 1, outgoing Mennonite Church USA Executive Director Jim Schrag offered a kind of farewell address by calling the church to unfurl its sails.

He told the story of missionary Hudson Taylor, who refused to pray for a wind to take a ship out of dangerous waters until the captain first unfurled the sails.

"Perhaps things are too calm in Mennonite Church USA and we're drifting," he said. "This is a time to unfurl our sails to catch the wind of God."

Schrag asked if we've grown accustomed to our surroundings and "are unaware of the currents and compulsions of our society that push us in directions we may not have chosen."

We Mennonites are better givers than receivers, he said. "We pride ourselves as generous and self-sufficient, but this is no formula for being filled with the breath of God."

Referring to the story in John 20, he said the disciples huddled behind closed doors. But Jesus entered, and "when he leads, the doors open."

We must be aware of the ways we have locked the doors to God's Spirit, he said.

Steve Brown spoke about Churches Supporting Churches, which pairs Mennonite Church USA congregations with congregations that suffered loss from Hurricane Katrina.

The morning worship on July 2 focused on "Empowered by the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:11-16). Shane Claiborne, author of *Jesus for President* and founding partner of The Simple Way, a faith community in inner-city Philadelphia, called on his listeners to "ask what it means to be radical noncomformists to the ways of the world."

Claiborne, who said, "I'm not a Mennonite, but it's the best thing I've been mistaken for," said many people are listening to the alternative values Mennonites have.

He looked at stories of Jesus in the Gospels and concluded, "The gospel spreads best through fascination."

He noted that recent research from George Barna found that when non-Christians were asked about their images of Christians, number one was that they're anti-gay. Second was "judgmental," and third was "hypocrites."

"We have a bit of an image problem," he said.

Claiborne grew up in east Tennessee in a church where "people go to the altar just as I am and leave just as they were." His own conversion to following Jesus occurred when he encountered the question, How can we worship a homeless man on Sunday and ignore one on Monday?

He and other students at Eastern University eventually formed The Simple Way and decided that "we're going to stop complaining about the church we came from and work on becoming the church we dream of."

As a nation and as Christians, we've become too comfortable, he said. "We compromise the cost of following Christ to get more people to the altar."

Claiborne said he's witnessed Christians around the world working at reconciliation. The key, he said, is that we disagree well. People can be right and still be mean, but "when you're mean, no one wants to listen to you."

We're like the donkey that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. It's not about us. "We're just the asses Jesus rides on," he said.

More than 6,500 Mennonites filled Nationwide Arena July 2 for a joint adult and youth worship to focus on "Centered in the Spirit." Mother-daughter team June Alliman Yoder and Mandy Yoder Schrock used four images to talk about the relationship of the human spirit and the Holy Spirit.

A relief pitcher describes an emphasis on human ability. An Amish bench approach tries to leave everything up to the Holy Spirit.

The last two images—the EPR paradox (named

"I yearn for unlimited resources and inner strength."—Marvin Lorenzana

"To dwell in the Spirit means to … create a home for the Spirit to dwell."—Megan Ramer

"Sometimes I have to be reminded that I am not the center of the universe."—John Powell

"If our gospel is not good news to poor people, it is not the gospel of Jesus." —Jim Wallis

for physicists Einstein, Podolsky and Rosen) and the GPS—reflect a kind of partnership that exists between humans and the Spirit.

"The way we relate to the Holy Spirit is a collaborative affair," said Yoder Schrock.

Alliman Yoder asked, "What if the Spirit needs you?" She looked at the story in Matthew in which Jesus told his followers to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the harvest and Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians that he planted the seed and Apollos watered, but the Lord gives the increase. "The Spirit cannot do its help without our help," she said.

Ultimately, they said, the goal is to be centered in the Spirit. Both speakers named examples of people who live centered in the Spirit.

About 180 children from the children's convention performed several songs, and a youth and adult choir also performed two pieces.

An offering was taken to support the education of first-generation immigrant pastors.

The morning worship on July 3 focused on "Dwelling in the Spirit" and used the practice of Lectio Divina (divine reading). The worship leaders read Ephesians 3:14-21 (NLT) several times and asked participants to focus on a word or phrase, how this speaks to them today and what God is inviting them to from this.

The morning's speakers then did the same.

Marvin Lorenzana, director of the Multicultural Services Office at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., said, "I yearn for unlimited resources and inner strength." He spoke of how he has experienced "sustenance in times of trial."

Megan Ramer, pastor of Chicago Community Church, heard a clear summons to fall on her knees and pray. "To dwell in the Spirit means to make a dwelling place," she said, "to create a home for the Spirit to dwell."

John Powell, Ministry Development consultant and interim director for U.S. Ministries at Mennonite Mission Network, said that sometimes he has to be reminded that he is "not the center of the universe." Christ is "an anyhow presence," he said. Even if we ignore him, he's with us anyhow.

Participants later shared in Communion.

At July 4's evening worship, *Sojourners* editor-in-chief and co-founder Jim Wallis greeted Mennonites "a friend of the family" who has been enriched by the Anabaptist movement and Mennonites. "Your best stuff is the right stuff," he said, and you need to share it.

The evening's theme was "Sent by the Spirit" and focused on John 20:19-21 and Isaiah 61:1-3. Wallis noted that right after Jesus said to his followers, "Peace be with you," he sent them into a world of conflict.

Wallis said he grew up in an evangelical family that emphasized "getting saved" at a young age. But faith had no public element. Later, he learned that "God is personal but not private."

Referring to the Isaiah text, which Jesus applied to himself in Luke 4:18-21, Wallis asked the audience, "Is Jesus' mission statement the same as ours?" Jesus proclaimed good news to the poor, he said. "If our gospel is not good news to poor people, it is not the gospel of Jesus."

Wallis commended young people, who "are less concerned about what you have to believe to be a Christian than what you have to do because you're a Christian."

We all are called to address poverty, he said. "God cares more about the 30,000 children who died today from preventable diseases than about gay marriage amendments in Ohio."

Wallis looked at the story of Jesus' feeding of the 5,000. In a recession, he said, we tend to hold on to our lunch, unlike the boy in the story. But in God's economy, we share it.

Mennonites' "best stuff is the right stuff," he said. "As a friend of the family, I urge you to not be shy about sharing your best stuff."

Following the message, worship leaders Regina Shands Stoltzfus and Joel Miller invited people to come to the front to receive anointing with oil from one of the ministers spread across the room. Hundreds came forward.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

Youth worship and are filled

Anna Groff

You cannot separate yourself from God any more than you can separate yourself from your breath.
—Shane Hipps

Jeremy Kempf (left) and Erica Weston lead the youth worship.

Youth from across the nation greeted each other with high fives and laughter in the foyer of Nationwide Arena in Columbus 45 minutes before the start of the Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 opening worship service on the evening of June 30.

Excitement heightened with a blast of music as the curtains opened and more than 4,000 youth rushed to find seating near the front of the stadium.

Yellow and green glow sticks shot into the crowd, and the surrounding panels blazed, "Columbus Welcomes Mennonite Church USA."

The real noise began when poet Brenda Matthews, better known as Momma Brenda, opened her talk by saying, "Make some noise up in this place. God lives in the praise of his people."—*Heidi Martin*

Brenda Matthews

Shane Hipps

Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg

Tuesday evening, June 30: 'Celebrating the Spirit'

Poet Brenda Matthews recited a poem on how God grants peace, then asked for three things from the audience: heart, focus and attention.

Matthews' production company, Imani Nia, uses the spoken word to teach alcohol, tobacco and HIV prevention in Chicago public schools. She noted statistics that included the number affected by alcohol and tobacco use on a daily basis.

"The purpose of the enemy is to steal, kill and destroy," said Matthews in reference to the statistics. "It's a sad day we're living in."

Reading from Psalm 139, Matthews reminded youth that they were called from infancy to live as people of God. She challenged the youth to take advantage of each moment of the worship services and sessions this week despite any mistakes of their past.

"It's time for you to step into your destiny," she said. "It's time for you to make some noise. It's time for you to turn this ship around."

Matthews encouraged the youth to not only glean personally from their experiences this week but to take the gospel back to their homes and communities and out to the world.

"We need you to be a witness and not be ashamed. Don't be afraid of the gospel, young people," she said.—*Heidi Martin*

Wednesday morning, July 1: 'God's Awesome Power'

A stomp group performed before Shane Hipps, lead pastor of Trinity Mennonite Church in Phoenix, Ariz., addressed the youth. Hipps began his message with a dance as well, though it had nothing to do with the session.

Referring to the convention theme, Hipps said that "spirit" and "breath" are the same word in Hebrew and Greek.

"All of God's love and power are in [each] breath because it is God's Spirit," said Hipps. "The simplest truth of all this stuff is that the fullness of God's power resides in each and every breath we take."

As a pastor, he has many come to him with confessions and questions about the reality of God's forgiveness. His response is simple.

"If you want to understand the nature of God, understand the nature of the breath you just took," said Hipps. "Your breath has no judgment in it at all. Your breath is completely faithful. Your breath doesn't reject you. You cannot separate yourself from God any more than you can separate yourself from your breath."—*Heidi Martin*

Wednesday evening, July 1: 'Face our Fears'

Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg, a pastor at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio, said her family fit eight of the 10 things that define a redneck, according to the list on one of her brother's T-shirts.

Schrock-Ringenberg revealed her fears to the youth during the July 1 evening worship. "Physical scars aren't as easy to cover as emotional scars," she said as she described her family growing up in a cinder block home in Kansas.

At age 13 she started sharing a bed with her mom because her dad threatened to kill her mom.

"It's not like he's a drunk or a druggie, he's just really mean," she said.

During her freshman year of high school her family kicked her dad out. Finally she hoped the fear would disappear; but it only changed. She compared her story to how the disciples responded to their fear in John 20:19-22. "They did the thing that all of us would have done; they hid."

Schrock-Ringenberg said she continued to hide her fears. "By the time I reached high school I knew what it would take to survive," she said. "I became the person everyone else wanted me to be." On the outside she had it all together, but on the inside she felt miserable.

She found ways to cope. At her Mennonite college she titled herself a CK (convict's kid) when in conversation with PKs (pastors' kids) or MKs (missionary kids). She thought her weaknesses were unacceptable but realized her fears held her captive. Just as Jesus led the disciples out of their hiding, we aren't alone, she said.

"We spend so much time hiding who we are because we are scared of what others will think," she said.

Schrock-Ringenberg concluded by inviting youth to imagine what the church would look like if its people would no longer be held by fear.
—*Anna Groff, Abri Houser for* mPress

Continued on page 12

Leonard Dow

Shane Claiborne

Katie Boyts

Continued from page 11

Thursday morning, July 2: 'Emptied'

Leonard Dow, senior pastor at Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia, described a missed opportunity he regrets to this day.

While in South Africa with a Mennonite Central Committee learning tour, Dow regularly observed a group of Christians dressed in white and singing in Zulu, cleanse themselves daily in the ocean. On his final day he felt the Spirit prompting him to join them at the water's edge. When he walked forward, a man asked him, "Do you want to be cleansed?"

Dow said everything in him wanted to say yes, but as the man reached out, Dow said no.

"I had no problem working for God," he said, but he could not bring himself to simply go before God on his knees in the water.

Dow said young people also need "unconditional rest. … Not sleeping in until noon but rest in spirit," he said. Dow encouraged the youth to be like Mary (in John 12), who washed Jesus' feet with perfume and her hair.

"Mary had a lot on her shoulders," he said, "but her response was to worship the Lord."

He challenged them to remove earbuds and silence their cell phones to refocus on God, as he acknowledged that even a youth convention can be a distraction.

"When it's all said and done, it's about our Lord," he said. He challenged the youth to "not only be radical in our work but radical in our worship" and invited them to pray out loud.—*Anna Groff*

There's gotta be more than just getting born again, again … We're made to live for something bigger than ourselves.
—Shane Claiborne

Friday morning, July 3: 'Filled as a New Creation'

Shane Claiborne, author and founding partner of a faith community in Philadelphia, told the youth he's been "born again" at least six times while attending four youth groups during his growing-up years in east Tennessee.

Later in life he questioned the effects of the act. "There's gotta be more than just getting born again, again," he said.

Before founding A Simple Way in Philadelphia, Claiborne asked Mother Teresa for an internship with Missionaries of Charity, and to his surprise she accepted. While in Calcutta, Claiborne noticed Mother Teresa's terribly deformed feet when she removed her shoes for worship. He later found out that when the Missionaries of Charity receive donated shoes, Mother Teresa selects the worst of the shoes for herself, and over time that has damaged her feet.

"We're made to live for something bigger than ourselves," he said. Claiborne returned to Philadelphia charged with Mother Teresa's commission to "find your Calcutta" and now works to bring the "kingdom on earth as it is in heaven" in real and tangible ways. Following Christ's instructions to invite the marginalized to a party instead of friends, Claiborne's community organized a "kingdom party" in downtown Philadelphia despite the laws making it illegal to distribute food to homeless people.—*Anna Groff*

July 3 evening: *Upside Down King* musical

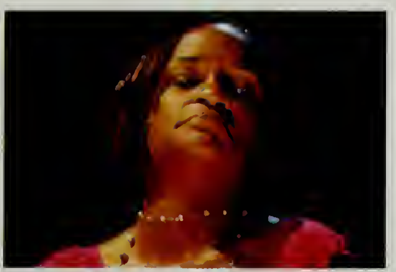
Following the hymn sing, Western District Conference and Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., presented the musical *The Upside-Down King* in Nationwide Arena.

When Donald Kraybill's book on Christian discipleship, *The Upside-Down Kingdom*, came out in 1978, Doug and Jude Krehbiel, Newton, Kan., wrote a song called "The Kingdom That's Upside Down," which they later recorded. The song paved the way for the musical.

Anna Groff

From left: Josh Powell, Bridget Kratzer and Clint Harris perform in "Upside Down King" on July 3.

Dustin Galyon



Cyneatha Millsaps

Hugo Saucedo

Saturday morning, July 4: 'Inspired to Live'

The following four shared their stories with the youth: Katie Boyts, Dustin Galyon, Cyneatha Millsaps and Hugo Saucedo.

Boyts, a massage therapist, writer and speaker from Portland, Ore., began by describing the clutch of bulimia she experienced in high school and her former obsession with the "feeling of emptiness" after every meal.

Fast-forward to college in Kansas, where Boyts' healing began. "In the middle of Kansas," she said, "I met God." Boyts said God was the listening ears and attentive eyes of fellow student and friend David and professor Andrea. During one pivotal dinner, Boyts noticed David watch her eating. "He wasn't angry or judgmental—just observant," she said. Boyts did not purge herself after that meal.

Boyts said she is still on a journey with her body but knows deeply that "the body is good and connected to God."

Galyon, now a speaker and coach, grew up in a Christian home and had passion for his faith and for basketball. As a high school senior, he had his university chosen, but his curiosity was piqued when a coach from a Mennonite college recruited him. Now he attributes that to the Spirit moving.

When he visited Hesston (Kan.) College, the coach asked what he wanted from college. Galyon said a place to heighten his basketball skills, be challenged academically and grow spiritually.

The coach responded, "We'll do all three—just in reverse order."

Galyon decided to attend. "With the Mennonites, I started to understand the life of Jesus," he said and is now an admissions counselor and coach at Hesston.

Millsaps, lead pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill., said her peaceful childhood in Elkhart, Ind., took a terrible turn around age 9: her parents divorced, an uncle died and her mother became a paranoid schizophrenic.

At age 15, Millsaps reached her lowest point and spent almost every day trying to force herself into oncoming traffic to end her life. However, she said, God intervened. Around that time a group of young seminarians moved to her neighborhood in an intentional community, Fellowship of Hope. This group helped her family with their groceries and even the mortgage payments. They provided the hope that Millsaps and her siblings needed and demonstrated God's love.

Saucedo, director of Mennonite Voluntary Service for Mennonite Mission Network, said he had to choose between football or church in high school. "I may have grown up Mennonite, but in Texas, football is the religion of choice," he said.

During playoffs his senior year, he chose to attend a church retreat instead of the playoff game—not realizing that small decision would impact his life forever.

Saucedo let go of the privileges high school football gave him and made the decision to go to college. That led to work with various service organizations and as a conference youth minister and finally to his director position.

"God has a way of working with our insecurities and using them," he said.—*Anna Groff*

Saturday evening, July 4: 'Empowered with the Spirit'

Greg Boyd, author and pastor of Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minn., noticed the energy of the youth during worship before he spoke.

"I encourage you to cherish the traditions you have," said Boyd. "Take this energy back to your [churches] but cherish your traditions."

Boyd began by describing the emptiness that once loomed in his soul.

Although there are millions of ways to try and fill the emptiness, all, except the Holy Spirit, are false, Boyd said.

Boyd shared three ways to yield to the Holy Spirit. First, he encouraged youth to remain awake to the fact that God himself dwells with us. Second, ask God to lead in each moment. Third, respond to the prompting of the heart.

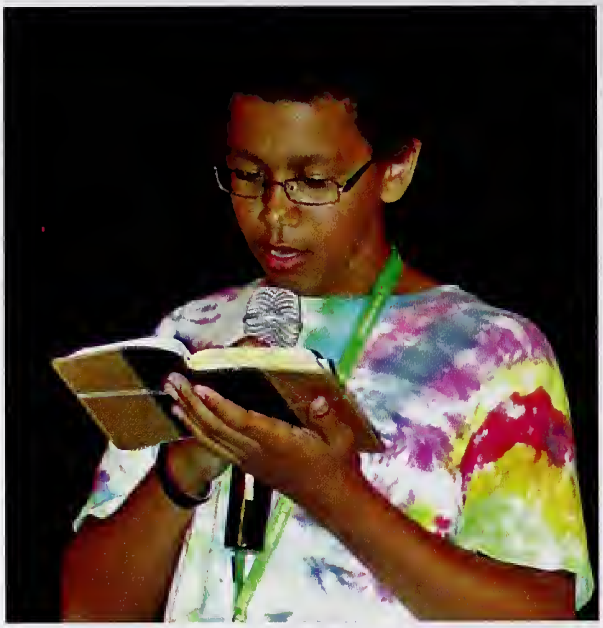
"You may look weird," said Boyd. "So what? Normality is way overrated. ... We're to be people who march to a different drum because we have a different Spirit," said Boyd.—*Heidi Martin*

Take this energy back to your churches but cherish your traditions.
—Greg Boyd

Greg Boyd

Discovery Celebrations

Junior highers worship, serve in Columbus


Anna Groff

Alexander Delgadillo of Iglesia Menonita del Buen Pastor, Goshen, Ind., reads Scripture on July 3.

More than 200 junior high students met for worship sessions, known as "Discovery Celebration," or gathered for small group activities during Convention 2009.

The junior youth schedule began at 8 a.m. each day and wrapped up by 9 p.m. Split into groups of eight with two leaders per group, there were a total of 25 groups.

"Separation [between junior youth and the adult and youth conventions] has been true in the past," said Todd Lehman of Hesston, Kan. "Now the intent is to still provide a junior high convention but for it to feel like it's part of the whole, broader picture of convention."

In earlier years, parents attending Mennonite conventions as delegates needed a place to go and a way to feel involved, said Lehman.

But the junior youth convention has been growing in popularity as a convention in its own right; junior high youth groups are intentionally choosing to attend Mennonite convention because of the junior youth feature.

Lehman said that half the junior youth registered because their parents were delegates, and half came specifically because of the junior youth feature.

Lehman and three others, spent 18 months planning the events of the junior youth convention. Their efforts did not go unnoticed; the days were packed with activity. Throughout the week, junior high students participated in a scavenger hunt around the city of Columbus, attended the zoo and Zoombezi Bay Water Park and contributed to various service projects.

The Discovery Celebrations reflected the format of the youth worship services with a band, speaker and time for small group interaction. Music was lead by The Ransom Project, a band from southeast Iowa that formed in 2002.

John Brommels, Cincinnati, provided entertainment and sound messages through drama.

Marty Troyer, pastor of Houston Mennonite Church, was the featured speaker, with assistance from Samantha "Sam" Lioi.

"After one and a half or more years of planning," said Lehman, "one of the biggest highlights is just seeing students here and enjoying themselves and seeing groups form an identity as they get to know each other."

Group leader Carrie Nofziger, Archbold, Ohio, was pleasantly surprised by daily interactions.

"It's cool to see love and friendship grow among groups of middle schoolers who didn't know each other the day before," said Nofziger.—*Heidi Martin*

Junior high youth worship during Discovery Celebration.

Anna Groff

Junior highers almost triple seed money

One service project for the junior high gathering began long before the start of convention, when each student received a $5 bill in the mail. This was referred to as "seed money" as the students were asked to invest the money so that it might grow, just as a seed is planted in the ground and produces much fruit.

Students invested their money by buying gas to mow lawns, ingredients for a bake sale and tools for a car wash. The students grew the seed money from the original $1,200 to $4,368. The money was collected in an offering during the July 2 Discovery Celebration and will be used for scholarships to aid people who will travel to Pittsburgh for Convention 2011. —*Heidi Martin*

Living the Spirit

Anna Groff

Children commit random acts of kindness

Anna Groff

WELCOME
Immigrants

Above: Susan Dengler, associate professor of music at Goshen (Ind.) College, personified the "Holy Spirit" and visited the children's gathering each morning during Convention 2009. She led them in songs and stories relating to the Convention 2009 theme.

Above right: From left, moderator Ed Diller and outgoing moderator Sharon Waltner pause during an interview to visit with Julian Ward and Jacob Durst, who were collecting donations. Throughout the week the children asked for money to help repair the playground equipment for Iglesia Menonita del Cordero in Brownsville, Texas. This congregation works with many families living in poverty in South Texas. The children collected more than $1,500 by the end of the week.

Right: On July 4, the children split into groups and visited five local hotels serving Convention 2009 attendees for their Service Project, "Random Acts of Kindness." They sang songs and passed out gift bags with candy, snacks, a thank-you note and other treats. During the send-off, children's coordinator Carol Grieser told the children, "We are ambassadors for Mennonite Church USA. We want to show them peace."—*Anna Groff*

Anna Groff

Mennonite
Church
USA

Convention 2009

June 30 - July 5 • Columbus, Ohio

Breathe
And be Filled

John 20 : 21-22

2

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6

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Scenes from Convention 2009

1. **Several thousand youth raise their hands in praise and celebration listening to speaker Brenda Matthews during the youth worship June 30 at the Nationwide Arena.** Photo by Mike Yoder

2. **Children's Convention participants sing one of several songs they performed July 2 at the joint youth and adult worship.** Photo by Chase Snyder

3. **Youth and adult choir performs at the joint worship service.** Photo by Brandon Long

4. **Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, Nancy Roynon, Megan Ramer and Regina Shands Stoltzfus discuss "kitchen table theology" at the Mennonite Women USA dinner on July 1.** Photo by Patricia Burdette

5. **Crowds of youth rush through the door of Exhibition Hall on opening night, June 30. Free handouts from vendors created the enthusiastic rush through the doors.** Photo by Mike Yoder

6. **Evan Stovall, a member of the Seattle Mennonite Church, joins other youth group volunteers in framing a house July 1 for a Mennonite Disaster Service project. The framed house will be shipped to Mississippi.** Photo by Tyler Falk

7. **Titus Peachey (left) of Lancaster Pa., Susan Mark Landis of Orrville, Ohio, and Michael Schrag of Indianapolis build a symbolic house during the economic house-building project.** Photo by J. Tyler Klassen

8. **Jerry Holsopple with the glass cross behind him that he made.** Photo by Mark Lawrenson

Navel gazing removes us from mission

Marathana Prothro is identity director for Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership.

The only thing I love more than seeing Mennonites' expressions when I tell them my last name is Prothro is offering my job title—identity director. It gets even better when I explain it and use the word "branding."

At Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 in Columbus, Ohio, June 30-July 5, someone used the word impossible to describe my job. I can see how he'd come to that conclusion, even if he weren't referring primarily to the nature of identity formation as an ever-evolving process.

After all, we've got research from here to Timbuktu that tells us members are identifying more with the lifestyles and values of our rich, capitalist, consumer-driven, nationalistic and politically polarized culture than those of our Anabaptist tradition. We interpret and apply our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* in varying ways, and continue to struggle with how—exactly—we agree and disagree in love. We face systemic issues of racism, sexism, ageism and protectionism and live in fear of the real possibility of significantly reduced donor dollars in an economic recession.

We need to resist the temptation of shaping our church according to the systems and definitions of success our society reflects.

In short, we're smack dab in the middle of an identity crisis.

If I were a person who solely gauged success by the measures of our society, I likely would agree with my good brother who called my job impossible. However, if I choose to trust that Jesus meant what he said, I must believe otherwise. As Christians and citizens of another kingdom, we need to resist the temptation of shaping our church according to the systems and definitions of success our society reflects.

Sure, efficiency and increased organizational partnerships are fine, but are other Americans catching glimpses of God's kingdom because of the way we as individuals, congregations, conferences, agencies and a denomination interact with society? Maybe. But I can't help wonder whether the glimpses they see are enough to convince them we're any different from their perception of Christians as judgmental hypocrites who are against homosexuality.*

In *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Leslie Newbigin reminds us that the moment we decide to follow Jesus and breathe in God's Spirit, our definition of what is plausible must change. As earthly, literate creatures, we struggle with reconciling anything that can't be proven with hard-and-fast data or demonstrated on paper. We struggle to differentiate ourselves from society because owning our new definition of what is plausible makes us look foolish to the doctors, lawyers, business people and reporters who live down the street.

But if we tend our identity as a people and church sent by God, we find courage and strength. Ours is a tradition of believers who understand Christianity as more than a moment of salvation—but as a lifetime of continuously choosing to throw out the values of society to follow Jesus and join God's work.

These are the people with whom I identify. Together we identify ourselves as Mennonites, specifically "Mennonite Church USA." At Columbus, almost 8,000 of us were together, deepening our commitment to Christ and each other. I think conventions are important for this very reason. Yet I can't help but wonder whether we deepened our commitment to our communities beyond the Mennonite organizational chart or family tree.

I hope so, because there's a whole heap of suffering out there. The longer we gaze at our navels and focus our energy inward, the longer others go without sensing God's movement around them and the farther we get from pursuing our mission as being sent to and for the world.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that I am finishing my work as identity director to complete my master's degree, beginning in August. Even though the time has come for me to move on—for now—it's important to note that the church still needs someone to tend our identity and challenge us to continually seek new ways of finding and joining God's work so that others may experience Jesus' healing and hope.

Is it an impossible job? I don't think so. It may be difficult, but with the power of the Holy Spirit and the application of the right communication strategies, it's definitely possible. TM

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

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*According to research by The Barna Group, the top three descriptors non-Christians used to describe Christians were that they were against homosexuality, were judgmental and were hypocrites.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15**

Delegates address human trafficking

Also reinforce prior resolutions on human sexuality, health-care access

J. Tyler Klassen of mPress

Delegates to Convention 2009 processed resolutions at preassigned tables, and then table representatives carried their table's messages to the microphones.

Delegates to Mennonite Church USA's Convention 2009 broke ground with one new resolution and reinforced earlier actions with two other resolutions. The "dialogue" provision in the denomination's human sexuality statement, however, drew the most discussion. A new resolution calling for additional help with dialogue was written by the resolutions committee in response to several developments during convention week.

Three pastors who wrote an "Open Letter" calling for radical hospitality for LGBT* people met with the Executive Board on June 30 and requested that conferences not be allowed to discipline congregations or ministers when they are at variance with conference policies and beliefs (see page 23).

On July 2, a group of activists with the "Pink Menno Campaign" held a press conference to ask for full inclusion of LGBT people in the church (see page 25). The press conference drew Fox News and Associated Press. Some delegates became aware during the week that their hometown newspapers had picked up the AP story.

"We are aware of current and ongoing debate," says the statement, "over the issue of human sexuality and conference response to congregations in variance. We acknowledge the pain and frustration of this issue for a number of conferences, congregations, families and individuals. We acknowledge the statements by Mennonite Church USA on human sexuality, which have been previously passed and are currently in place, while we also acknowledge the presence of dissenting voices within our denomination. We affirm the church's commitment to ongoing dialogue and 'agreeing and disagreeing in love.'"

In response to these dynamics, the delegate assembly overwhelmingly passed A Resolution on Following Christ and Growing Together as Communities Even in Conflict. The resolution calls on the Executive Board "to work with conferences to provide and encourage the use of resources which assist conferences and congregations to engage in this discernment."

Delegate Keith Weaver, moderator for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference, alerted the Delegate Assembly to growing concerns in his conference that Mennonite Church USA is "at best ambiguous about or at worst determined to change statements [on human sexuality]." He indicated that he wanted the resolution to pass to help rebuff those in his conference who are pushing to leave Mennonite Church USA.

I am concerned about the fragility of unity. Some of us will have to go home and hold things together.—Marion Bontrager

But Luke Yoder, a delegate from Denver's First Mennonite Church and leader of the "Pink Menno Campaign," called for the resolution to be rejected.

"Younger generations are much less fearful [about inclusion of LGBT people] than older generations," said Yoder. "You should know that young adults have decided to leave the church [over this issue]."

The controversy left some delegates worrying about the ramifications of the debate at home.

"I am concerned about the fragility of unity," said delegate Marion Bontrager from Hesston,

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*lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

Delegate assembly (continued)

Everett Thomas

Moderator Sharon Waltner received a spirited ovation from the delegates at the conclusion of the assembly on July 4.

Kan. "Some of us will have to go home and hold things together."

Mennonite Church USA moderator Sharon Waltner asked for the last word before the assembly voted on the resolution. Referring to the denominational statement "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love," Waltner said, "We are disagreeing. How are we modeling that?"

The delegates were unanimous in their support of another resolution that broke new ground. Statement Against Human Trafficking, Modern Day Slavery was presented by Mennonite Women USA executive director Rhoda Shenk Keener, who prepared the resolution with assistance from Mennonite Central Committee and Executive Leadership.

Citing the unnamed concubine in Judges 19 who was raped and killed—her body divided among the 12 tribes of Israel—the statement uses the biblical text, "Consider it, take counsel and speak out."

"If we don't speak out," Keener said to the delegate body, "the traffickers will win."

Although there was unanimous support for the resolution, many delegates raised concerns about causes of the trade.

"Trafficking is a symptom of underlying economic problems," Janie Beck, delegate from Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold, Ohio, said, "and will continue until those problems are addressed."

One table group proposed amending the resolution to create a task force to follow up on the action. That proposed amendment failed.

The delegate assembly also passed a third resolution entitled Resolution on Healthcare Access: Next Step. Prepared originally by Tim Jost, Harrisonburg, Va., the statement is a follow-up to a 2007 action by the delegate assembly to provide health-care access to all pastors.

"The key moral issue," said Jost, "is whether all Americans should have access to health care."

The resolution asks members and congregations "to urge their congregational representatives to support legislation that would extend access to health care to all Americans, particularly the poor and disadvantaged, while we engage local health-care needs."

Seven delegates among the 850-member body voted against the resolution.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Interchurch relations

The major focus of the July 1 session was interchurch relations, with representatives introduced from six denominations—Mennonite Church Canada, Conservative Mennonite Conference, Brethren in Christ (BIC), Church of the Brethren, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), Church of God (Cleveland)—and a representative from Christian Churches Together.

"You among all of us [Anabaptists] have critical mass," BIC moderator Warren Hoffman told the assembly. "Whatever it is we do together,

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(Photos: A. Koppenhaver)

Delegate assembly (continued)

[Mennonite Church USA] will be the ballast that holds us steady in community."

The ELCA representative, Michael Trice, began on a lighter note. After asking how many delegates had family members who are Lutheran, he said, "You will know them by the kind of beer they drink."

But Trice quickly turned to the troubled history of our two traditions and noted that in 2006 the ELCA addressed their forebears' persecution and martyrdom of Anabaptists during the Reformation.

"No church should use the state to impose its practices on another," said the Lutheran statement. Trice also noted that a document being prepared for the 2010 Lutheran World Federation asks Anabaptists for forgiveness.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Building project draws questions

Questions about a planned new office building in Elkhart, Ind., sparked delegates' discussion on July 2 after Executive Board member Glen Guyton presented an update on Mennonite Mission Network's fundraising campaign for the office building and for the agency's annual fund.

The campaign has raised $8.4 million since 2006. An additional $2.3 million is needed by the end of the year to begin construction next spring, said Bethany Shue Nussbaum, a Mission Network development associate.

The building will be constructed on land adjacent to Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. It will serve Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership and Mennonite Education Agency.

Some delegates expressed doubts about the need for the building.

"I'm not so certain the next generation of Mennonites is going to desire a church with such a strong institutional center," said Phil Kniss of Harrisonburg, Va.

Others said church members weren't getting enough information or didn't feel ownership in the project.

Todd Lehman of Hubbard, Ore., said there was "some disconnect between what happens in the Mennonite ghettoes" such as Elkhart and church members who live far from those places.

But Judy Ebersole of Wichita, Kan., said that "some of us do feel the connection." She and others urged more specific and inspiring communication about the building project.

Responding to questions, Stanley Green, Mission Network executive director, said the agency is spending $265,000 a year to lease its current building.

Everett Thomas

Warren Hoffman (at podium) of the Brethren in Christ and other interchurch visitors joined delegates on July 1.

In an interview after the delegate session, Peter Graber, campaign director, said the new building would save the agency a lot of money because its annual operating cost would be $90,000, much less than that called for in the lease.—*Paul Schrag for mPress*

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Youth from Agora Christian Ministries of Columbus, Ohio, help clean up a yard as a servant project.

Trisha Handrich of mPress

From picking up trash to helping at VBS

Servant projects are a staple of conventions; Convention 2009 no exception

Service projects have become a staple of Mennonite conventions, and youth groups attending Convention 2009 had ample options to serve.

Sixty-one agencies accepted volunteers throughout the week, many taking a new group each day.

Many youth groups consider service projects a necessary aspect of Mennonite conventions.

"Its always kind of our expectation," said Jo Ward Selman, a youth sponsor from Waterford Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

The youth of Vincent Mennonite Church, in Spring City, Pa., felt the same way. "This is the fourth convention we've gone to and we've always done the service projects," said Loren Ruth, one of Vincent Mennonite's youth sponsors.

The assignments varied, depending on the agency each youth group worked with. Arloa Bontrager, Servant Project coordinator, and her team, Caty Wall and Lori Hershberger Blair, arranged all the service locations by cold calling organizations and seeking the cooperation of Robert Seed of Keep Columbus Beautiful.

Projects varied from picking up trash to helping young children in Vacation Bible School to removing honeysuckle from a waterway with City of Columbus Watershed Cleanup. Youth groups could request certain types of work, but for the most part they learned where they were going and what they were doing at the orientation meeting, just minutes before leaving.

The great diversity in service options is partly due to the response of the city of Columbus to the convention's infusion of Mennonites.

"The city has been overwhelmingly gracious in receiving people," Wall said.—*Chase Snyder for* mPress

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EB meets with Open Letter leaders

Four Executive Board members end terms; four begin new terms on board.

The Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (EB) on June 30 greeted new members, said goodbye to outgoing members and met with three organizers of the "Open Letter to Mennonite Church USA" regarding "radical hospitality," or welcoming LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) members.

The EB invited organizers of an open letter sent to Mennonite Church USA members this spring to the meeting, its final one of this biennium. Weldon Nisly, pastor of Seattle Mennonite Church; Cindy Lapp, pastor of Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church, and Karl Shelly, pastor of Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., explained the process of developing the letter, which Lapp said was signed by about 1,400 people, including 125 calling themselves pastors.

Mennonite Church USA moderator Sharon Waltner said, "It's crucial that we have conversation about our passions and concerns." She asked the three about their hopes for the letter.

Lapp noted that people are afraid. "I hope we can live out of love rather than fear."

Nisly said he hoped to encourage a new kind of conversation, using the denomination's statement on agreeing and disagreeing in love as a guideline. He said he hoped for a moratorium on the disciplining of congregations and for a trust of pastors.

"As long as discipline is the main way of responding to this concern, we will always have conflict," he said.

Shelly noted that "this is the only issue on which congregations have been disciplined" and asked, "Can we create a safer place to discern together?"

EB member Terry Shue asked if there had been conversation with conference leaders. Each responded that they had communicated with leaders in their respective conferences. Otherwise, the letter went to the entire denomination.

Janeen Bertsche Johnson, another EB member, said she was on the group in 2000 that helped create membership guidelines for the developing Mennonite Church USA. At that time, she said, there was a backlash to another welcoming letter, and the guidelines became harsher than she would have wished.

EB member Charlotte Hardt agreed with an observation of Shelly's that some leaders did not sign the letter out of fear of reprisal.

Samuel Lopez, one of four outgoing EB members, said later that the open letter is "a sensitive issue for the Hispanic Mennonite church" and that he hoped the Executive Board would take all Mennonite Church USA members into account.

Besides Lopez, Edie Landis, Sue Miller and Olivet McGhee left EB, having completed their terms. Waltner also left as moderator but will continue to meet with the board for two years as past moderator.

New EB members include Tina Begay, Farmington, N.M.; Juana Nuñez, Ocoee, Fla.; Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, Lancaster, Pa., and Dick Thomas, Ronks, Pa., nominated for moderator-elect. These four received affirmation from delegates later in the week.—*Gordon Houser*

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Seminar: Can we talk when we disagree?

More than 120 attend seminar to discuss ways of addressing homosexuality.

Mennonite Church USA outgoing moderator Sharon Waltner organized a seminar at Convention 2009 called "Can we talk when we disagree?" that was held July 1.

She enlisted the help of Carolyn Schrock-Shenk, who works in conflict mediation, to lead the meeting.

Schrock-Shenk asked the more than 120 participants to divide into groups of about a half dozen and respond to two questions: (1) What group process have you been part of (discussing homosexuality) that has not worked well? (2) What group process have you been part of that has been successful? The groups then reported their findings, and these were written down and collected.

Later the group divided into three caucuses: traditional, middle and progressive. These formed smaller groups and listed ideas and counsel for the Executive Board and area conferences of Mennonite Church USA. These, too, were reported and collected for use later (see box at right).

The assumptions of this meeting, said Schrock-Shenk, included the following:

- it's to help Mennonite Church USA;
- people are committed to strong relationships in spite of differences;
- everyone there worships the same God;
- conflict and debate are good;
- all of us have part of the truth but none of us has all the truth.

Schrock-Shenk also named discussion commitments: listen to understand, speak respectfully, focus on how we talk.

Among the ideas offered to the Executive Board were these:

- listen to racial-ethnic groups,
- model healthy ways of conflict resolution,
- exercise patience,
- don't let one group control the process,
- provide resources to congregations,
- name that there is a diversity of opinions,
- stop disciplining congregations,
- be aware of coercion.—*Gordon Houser*

Q & A with moderator Sharon Waltner and moderator-elect Ed Diller

What were the goals of the seminar (see above)?

Waltner: Dialogue attempts to build trust with difficult issues. I'm not sure we've done well with the difficult issues in the church. We'd rather split than talk.

Diller: All streams of information and feedback are extraordinarily helpful to church leadership.

What came out of the seminar?

Waltner: We will compile the ideas, look at them and distribute them. We were pleased to see similarities coming from all three groups (traditional, middle and progressive). We heard people from both ends of the spectrum say, "Give us more tools."

Will the Executive Board address this feedback soon?

Diller: At this point, it's too soon to tell.

How has the Executive Board responded to the Pink Menno Campaign?

Diller: We provided a statement from the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and the statement on Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love to the press. The Associated Press story isn't a summary of the convention. We have to face this tough issue but also report on other issues.

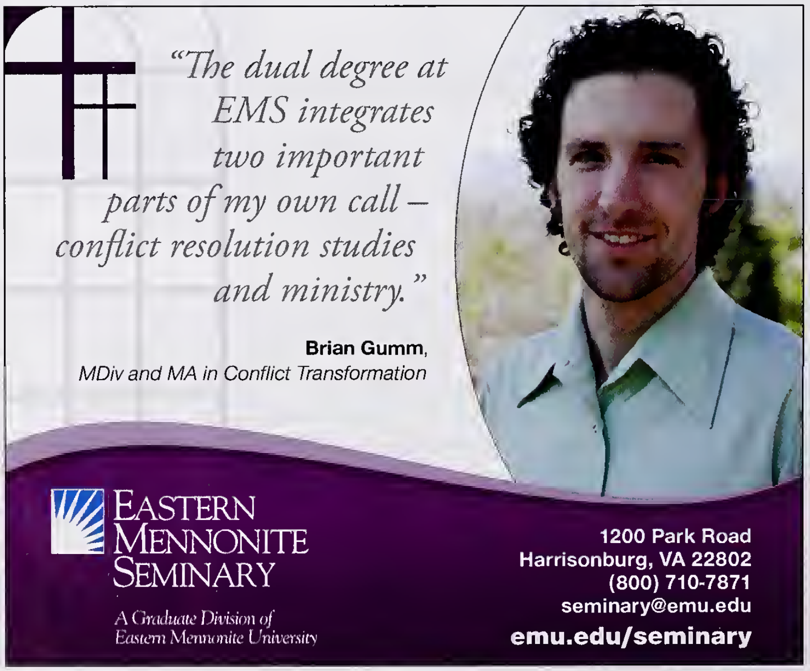
Waltner: It's disappointing that the AP article only includes one side. Human sexuality is one part of the gathering; unfortunately the [AP] didn't cover the other exciting aspects of Convention 2009.

What impact did the Pink Menno Campaign have on the Executive Board?

Waltner: I feel committed to retaining communication. Prior to the convention, I spent more time listening to the "progressive" group. At the convention, I've spent more time listening to the "traditional" group. Now the question is, How do we minister to the more silent middle? Also, I saw the Pink Menno Campaign extending hospitality, and people had difficulty knowing how to receive it.

Diller: The purpose of the Executive Board is to be there to empower congregations and conferences. We try to understand what impacts congregations. We need to be careful we don't destroy the bridges we need in five years to work at other social justice issues. We need to build hospitality both ways and keep the future church in mind.—*Anna Groff*

Editor's note: This interview on July 3 was interrupted by two young boys from the children's convention asking for money. See photo on page 15.



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Pink Mennos launch campaign

Approximately 100 Mennonites wearing pink gathered outside the convention center on July 2 for the "Pink Menno Campaign" witness and press conference to advocate for inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Mennonite Church USA.

After a time of singing and confession, three individuals from the campaign told their stories.

Cynthia Lapp, pastor at Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church, talked about the gifts of LGBT individuals in her congregation. Katie Hochstedler, who described herself as a "young queer Mennonite," called for the church to "be its best self." Luke Yoder of Denver spoke of his dream for the inclusion of his gay friends and queer sister.

The witness was only one aspect of the Pink Menno Campaign at Convention 2009. Other components included seminars and film viewings in the campaign's "hospitality room" and hymn sings in the convention center.

In an interview, Yoder said he appreciated the "overwhelming number of people wearing pink" and the many people interested in dialogue.

Yoder said a small group of people in opposition to the campaign became confrontational. While that group did not surprise him, "It was really disappointing to see that that happened and not much of a response from church leaders," he said.

Yoder also said the campaign recognizes that the issue's sensitive for certain groups within Mennonite Church USA, such as underrepresented racial-ethnic members. He acknowledged that this issue does not carry the same significance for all parts of the church but added, "Where can we find areas that we share the same passions?" He named immigration as one such issue.

A support network for LGBT individuals is one outgrowth of the campaign, said Yoder. "What happened in Columbus is a starting point for further conversation and discernment," he said, adding that the campaign will have a presence at Convention 2011 in Pittsburgh.

Regarding the resolution on conflict, Yoder said, "We're very hopeful that Mennonite Church USA will be able to provide those resources … so that the dialogue can be positive and move forward in meaningful ways."

In an interview, Hochstedler said, "We are trying to model what we want the church to be." *—Anna Groff*

Editor's note: *The inverted pink triangle, originally intended as a badge of shame by the Nazis, has become an international symbol of the gay rights movement, from Wikipedia.*

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Conservative leader draws large crowd

Rosedale (Ohio) Bible College president describes 'deep and wide' churches.

People have said Conservative Mennonite Conference (CMC) is about 20 years behind Mennonite Church USA," Dan Ziegler told an overflow crowd during a July 4 seminar at Convention 2009. "There's some truth to that when it comes to cultural issues, but theologically we are on different tracks."

Ziegler, president of Rosedale (Ohio) Bible College, then listed characteristics of the CMC. These include a high view of Scripture, inerrancy and inspiration, and Scripture as guide and authority. He also described CMC worship services as "blended" with a "low-church, nonformal piety."

There's not been an effort to proselytize and steal sheep [from Mennonite Church USA].—Dan Ziegler

Originally scheduled for one session, so many convention attendees were interested in the CMC that convention staff had to turn away dozens after 100 people filled the room beyond fire code capacity. Planners added a second, late-afternoon session in which 60 additional people heard Ziegler describe current realities for CMC.

According to Ziegler, CMC has two different types of congregations. One type is focused on faithfulness and the other on outreach. The faithfulness churches may be "deep" while the outreach churches may be "wide," Ziegler said. Another 15 percent of CMC congregations would be a mixture of both.

About 57 percent of CMC congregations are of the outreach type, and they have grown 18-20 percent in the past 10 years, he said. These tend to be more mixed ethnically and have a weaker affiliation with CMC. When congregations from this type leave CMC, they tend to become independent or become Vineyard churches.

The churches in the faithfulness type represent 43 percent of CMC; this group has declined slightly over the past 20 years. The faithfulness churches have a strong Anabaptist identity and value affiliation with CMC. When congregations in this type leave CMC, they tend to join the more conservative Biblical Mennonite Alliance.

The current number of faithfulness-type congregations includes 17 congregations that left Mennonite Church USA and joined CMC.

"When [Mennonite Church USA congregations] come in, they tend to come in on the faithfulness side," Ziegler said, then quickly added, "There's not been an effort to proselytize and steal sheep [from Mennonite Church USA]."

These former Mennonite Church USA congregations joining the faithfulness type have helped CMC keep a balance between the deep and wide congregational types, Ziegler said.

Conservative Mennonite Conference currently has 114 churches with a membership of 11,546.

CMC has two institutions: Rosedale Mennonite Missions, with 45 long-term workers, and Rosedale Bible College, which Ziegler described as "the only Mennonite Bible College in the United States."—*Everett J. Thomas*

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CALENDAR

Friendship Community will host their ***9th annual Golf Classic*** on Sept. 3 at Lebanon Valley Golf Course, 240 Golf Road, Myers-town, PA. For more information or ways to participate, check out www.friendshipcommunity.net. To register, call Betty Hess at 717-656-2466, ext. 165 or Email: bhess@friendshipcommunity.net.

Hesston Mennonite Church of Hesston, Kan., will celebrate its ***100 year anniversary*** Nov. 28-29. Those who have been associated with the congregation over the years are invited. For more information, call 620-327-4885, ext. 100 or Email: hesstonmc@hesstonmc.org

WORKERS

Albright, Thomas, was ordained as pastor of Ripple Church, a missional congregation, at Whitehall Mennonite Church, Whitehall, Pa., on April 19.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Hassinger, Isaac Miller and Seth Miller (twins), Feb. 5, to Sean Hassinger and Karen Miller, Boise, Idaho.

Hein, Rylie Marie, April 17, to Matthew and Erin Wiebe Hein, Hillsboro, Kan.

Hershberger, Gabriel Steven, June 23, to Nick and Ashlie Hollingsworth Hershberger, Sugarcreek, Ohio.

Lake Rittenhouse, Eva Jeri, May 5, to Ryan Rittenhouse and Jamie Lake, Goshen, Ind.

Mullet, Hayden Paige, June 24, to Scott and Jenna Schrock Mullett, Sarasota, Fla.

Reist, Jacob Bradley, June 4, to Josh and Sarah Nolt Reist, Manheim, Pa.

Smith, Asher Lee, June 20, to Aaron and Halie Schmidt Smith, Wichita, Kan.

Yoder, Kate Anna, June 16, to Chad and Julie Marcho Yoder, Harleysville, Pa.

MARRIAGES

Boehm/Lehman: Allison Boehm, Prairie Village, Kan., and Ross Lehman, Bluffton, Ohio, June 13, at Rainbow Mennonite Church, Kansas City, Kan.

Buller/Unruh: Dylan Buller, Goessel, Kan., and Lindsey Unruh, Goessel, June 13, at Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.

Coblentz/Gergon: Eric Coblentz, Hartville, Ohio, and Briana Gergon, Uniontown, Ohio, May 16, at Hartville Mennonite Church.

Hershberger/Mansfield: Heidi Hershberger, Hartville, Ohio, and Harold Mansfield, Hartville, June 5, at Hartville Mennonite Church.

Kauffman Jantzi/Mast: Hannah Kauffman Jantzi, Lancaster, Pa., and Jonathan Wade Mast, Berlin, Ohio, June 6, at the Kennel farm, Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, Mount Joy, Pa.

Landis/Leatherman: Joel Landis, Telford, Pa., and Tiffany Leatherman, Telford, June 27, at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford.

Penner/Smith: Anne Penner, Indianapolis, Ind., and Jesse Smith, Iowa City, Iowa, June 20, at Shalom Mennonite Church, Indianapolis.

Roth/Stoltzfus: Jess Roth, Denver, Colo., and Marcos Stoltzfus, Denver, June 20, at Wood River Mennonite Church, Wood River, Neb.

Rutt/Sauder: Jason Rutt, Harrisonburg, Va., and Alexis Sauder, Harrisonburg, June 6, at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

Sauder/Short: Alysa Sauder, Wauseon, Ohio, and Mark Short, Wauseon, June 26, ay North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

"For the Record" is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. To submit information, log on to www.TheMennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access our online forms. You can also submit information by email, fax or mail:

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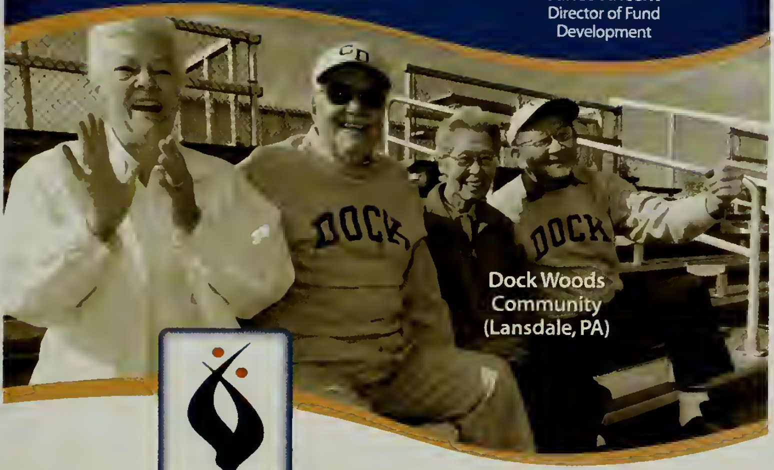
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DEATHS

Doerksen, Johnnie R., 83, Reedley, Calif., died June 24 of a stroke. Spouse: Marie Winkler Quenzer Doerksen. Spouse: Lodema Janzen Doerksen (deceased). Parents: Cornelius and Anna Reimer Doerksen. Children: Ron Doerksen, Cal Doerksen, Kathy Bauman, Randy Quenzer, Duane Quenzer; eight grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 29 at First Mennonite Church, Reedley.

Gehman, Paul W., 72, Lancaster, Pa., died June 22 of cancer. Spouse: Velma Sensenig Gehman. Parents: Paul E. and Mary Weaver Gehman. Children: Kenneth E., Cheryl L. Gainer; two grandchildren. Funeral: June 28 at East Petersburg Mennonite Church, East Petersburg, Pa.

Halteman, Anna S. Stauffer, 90, Souderton, Pa., died June 11. Spouse: Ellis B. Halteman (deceased). Parents: Ambrose C. and Emma Slotter Stauffer. Funeral: June 20 at Souderton Mennonite Homes Chapel.

Hershberger, Merlin Lee, 75, Walnut Creek, Ohio, died June 24. Parents: Homer and Leora Hostetler Hershberger. Funeral: June 28 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church.

Hershberger, Ollie Marie Brenneman Hershberger, 92, Kalona, Iowa, died June 25. Spouse: Clyde Hershberger (deceased). Parents: Erlis and Martha Marner Brenneman. Children: Cecil, Elaine Cole, Bea Knepp, Herb, Larry, Linda Cole; 25 grandchildren; 59 great-grandchildren; 15 great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 29 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Kuhns, James Winifred, 84, Harrisonburg, Va., died March 31 of idiopathic pulmonary interstitial fibrosis. Spouse: Olive Mae Clemens Kuhns. Parents: Allen Winifred and Anna Inez Shupe Kuhns. Children: Jean Kuhns Rissler, Genet Kuhns Orebaugh, Philip, Evelyn Kuhns Rankin; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 18 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Lederman, L. Cornell, 80, Leo, Ind., died June 25 from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Spouse: Kathryn "Kate" Slabach Lederman (deceased). Parents: Amos and Lilly Liechty Lederman. Children: Todd, Jodi Lederman-Maxton, Gina Anderson; six grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: June 29 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind.

Rohrer, Herman Holmes, 90, Sarasota, Fla., died June 26 of complication from an aneurism. Spouse: Maybelle Neuhouser Rohrer. Children: Douglas, Marilyn Davie, Pam Crawford; eight grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 30 at Bay Shore Mennonite Church, Sarasota.

Weirich, Dorothy Jean Deer Weirich, 80, Shipshewana, Ind., died March 13. Spouse: Joseph D. Weirich (deceased). Parents: Charles and Mildred Aduddell Deer. Children: Cheryl Barnes, Maria Weirich, Brenda Ransley, Glen Allen Weirich; six grandchildren. Funeral: May 17 at Marion Mennonite Church, Shipshewana.

Wenger, Dale Cook, 91, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, died June 19. Spouse: Twila M. Swartzendruber Wenger (deceased). Parents: Clark and Mamie Cook Wenger. Children: Marilyn Derstine, Ron, Galen; one grandchild. Private burial in Goshen, Ind., to be held at a later date.

Wingard, Betty Lou Yoder, 77, Middlebury, Ind., died May 29. Spouse: Harley J. Wingard (deceased). Parents: William and Elizabeth Miller Yoder. Children: Sharon Wyse, Terry, Debra Wingard, Jimmy; six grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; one step-great grandson. Funeral: June 2 at First Mennonite Church, Middlebury.

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Lancaster Mennonite School seeks a dynamic Christ-centered leader to serve as ***principal*** at its Lancaster campus, which consists of 800 students in grades 6-12. The opening comes with the promotion of the current principal to assistant superintendent. The candidate should be a leader who relates well to a diverse community and is passionate about excellence in a Christ-centered Anabaptist school. Essential skills include inspirational leadership, strong communication skills and a spiritual depth shaped by Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective. The candidate also should be able to supervise, work collaboratively, listen well and be knowledgeable about adolescent development, secondary curriculum and current trends in education. Having a principal certification, or being willing to acquire one, is expected. Experience and the ability to communicate in Spanish are desired but not essential. People from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups are encouraged to apply. For more information contact Assistant Superintendent Miles Yoder at 717-299-0436, ext. 302, or yoderme@lancastermennonite.org. The Lancaster campus is part of the Lancaster Mennonite School System of four schools that is led by a superintendent. For more information about LMS, please visit www.lancastermennonite.org.

Mennonite Mission Network seeks a ***host and hostess*** for a three-year term at London Mennonite Center, to begin in 2010. Hospitality is primary function; duties are varied. Contact Ruth L. Guengerich at Mennonite Mission Network, 866-866-2872, ext. 3062, or at ruthg@mennonitemission.net for additional information.

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Calgary First Mennonite Church, located in central Calgary, Alberta, invites applications for a ***full-time lead pastor*** position available for fall 2009. Our warm, intergenerational congregation of approximately 180 people seeks an applicant with a commitment to Mennonite theology and to the practices of the Mennonite church. We seek a spiritual leader with gifts of preaching, teaching and pastoral care to nurture a meaningful worship life for our congregation. Related education and experience in pastoral leadership is a priority. Please direct inquiries and resumés to our Pastor Search Committee Contact: Marguerite Jack: mjack@netkaster.ca.

Mennonite Central Committee West Coast office, located in Fresno, Calif., has an immediate opening for a ***human resources and general communications coordinator***. The position will manage the human resources systems and coordinate regional communications and serve as the regional connecting point for West Coast constituency, alumni and people in service with MCC. Qualified candidates will have a minimum of an associate degree in human resources with at least five years of experience in the human resources field and a demonstrated knowledge of California employment law. Knowledge of MCC, good relational skills and the ability to relate to diverse constituencies and produce and publish communications materials is required. A complete job description and application is available online at www.mcc.org/serve. Resume and letter of interest can be directed to Tim Croyle, Director of Human Resources MCC US via email tcroyle@mcc.org or by mail to MCC Great Lakes, 1013 Division St., Goshen, IN 46528, by Aug. 1, 2009.

CEO being sought for **Friendship Community**, a Mennonite-affiliated provider of services to the disabled. Located in Lititz, Pa., this 220-employee organization offers residential living and supportive social services. For more info or to apply, contact Caryn Howell with MHS Alliance at caryn@stiffneygroup.com or 574-537-8736.

Executive director being sought for ***Paxton Ministries***, a faith-based provider of housing and social services in Harrisburg, Pa. This 30-employee organization serves low-income and disadvantaged adults. For more info or to apply, contact Caryn Howell with MHS Alliance at caryn@stiffneygroup.com or 574-537-8736.

NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center invites applications for the position of ***executive director*** for immediate consideration. We are a program of the Mennonite church providing direct and indirect services to immigrants in Harrisonburg, Va. The executive director is responsible for the overall leadership of the agency. Bilingual in Spanish/English, master's degree and related experience with immigrants preferred, B.A. required, fund-raising experience and a commitment to Christian faith and nonviolent peacemaking required. Full-time. For full description and application process see http://sites.google.com/site/newbridgesjobannouncement/ or contact cynthiahunter@newbridgesirc.org.

Coming to Montreal for school or vacation? Enjoy Montreal's trendy "Plateau" district by staying at ***Maison de l'amitié Summer Guestrooms and Student residence***. Student housing available for September. Contact 514-843-4356, www.residencema.ca, reservations@maisondelamitie.ca.

Mountain View Mennonite Church, N.C., www.mtviewmennonitechurch.wordpress.com, is looking for a ***3/4-time ministry associate to work with young adults and youth*** beginning fall 2009. For complete job details, contact Dave Hartzler, mennodave@gmail.com; 828-461-1151.

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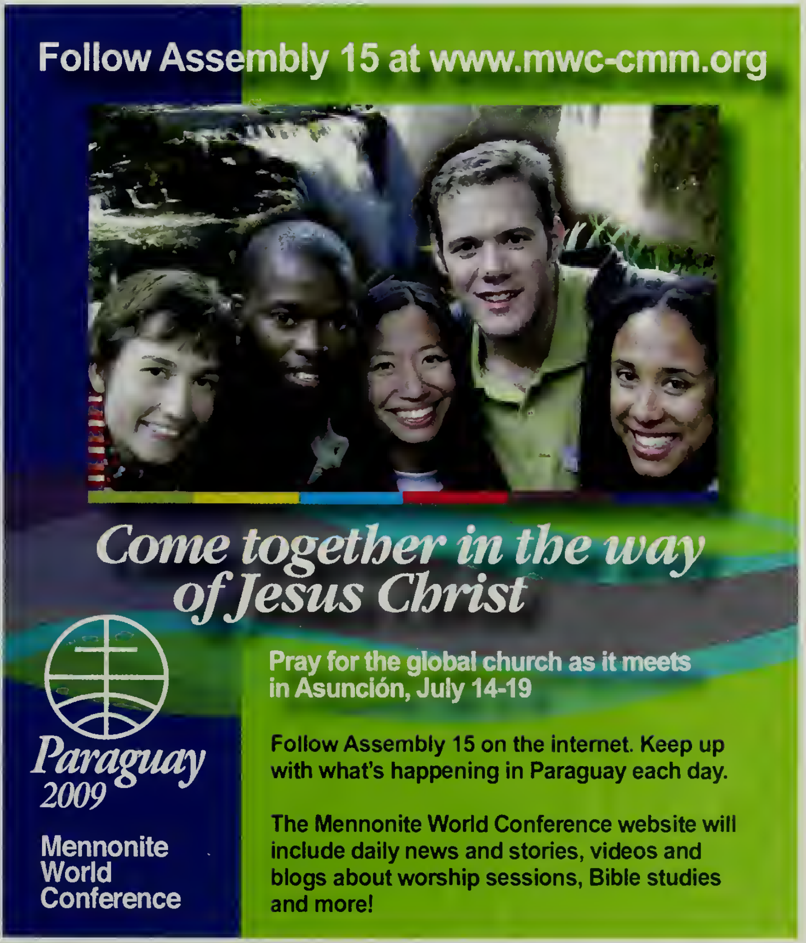
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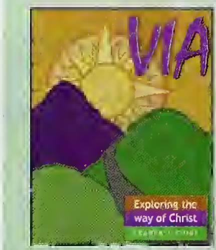

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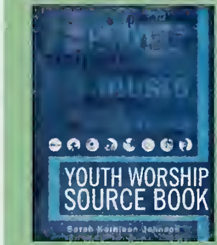

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First Pastors' Day kicks off week

Although Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 did not begin until the evening of June 30, convention planners provided a special welcome for pastors with a gathering that day.

"Are you tired?" asked worship leader and pastor Lois Harder. "I am."

The first-ever Pastors' Day saw a crowd of more than 400 gather for worship led by Lois and her husband, Tom Harder, co-pastors of Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kan.

The focus of Pastors' Day was on pastoral ministry from a missional perspective. Craig van Gelder, author of eight books on the missional church, was the plenary speaker.

A professor of congregational mission at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., van Gelder began with a review of trends in congregational development over recent decades. He then delineated six new approaches to church: the mega church ("Did the Mennonites miss that meeting?" van Gelder asked); the emerging church; global immigration church; multicongregation church; multicultural church and the social network church.

Van Gelder's second lecture focused on leadership and different kinds of change. But his primary theme was that change is happening and often comes from the margins.

"A congregation should have a vibrant conversation about what God is doing," van Gelder said, "and how much we would have to change this week to live into God's reality."

As part of the opening worship, Lois Harder danced to a reading of James Weldon Johnson's "A Negro Sermon" while Tom Harder provided guitar accompaniment. Daniel Klaassen read the sermon. Klaassen, Whitewater, Kan., is a Ministry Inquiry Program intern at Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church.

Mennonite Church USA executive director Jim Schrag opened Pastors' Day with a brief message. He likened the role of pastor to a captain standing in the crow's nest of an ancient sailing vessel searching for land.

"I chose this metaphor," Schrag said, "not because the [pastor's] eyes are better but because we have been called to a special place of vantage where the view really is longer, wider, broader and deeper. ... The position defines the calling, a very solitary place in the church."

Acknowledging an Anabaptist tradition that values the priesthood of all believers, Schrag said, "a crow's nest is not large enough for the entire crew [congregation]."—*Everett J. Thomas*

Parting shots from Convention 2009

Everett Thomas

Adult worship band (left to right): Kevin Heimes, Nate Gundy, David Hockman-Wert (guest), Tim Shue, Toby Hazlett and Maria Miller; Song Ju (Yun) is on piano.

Everett Thomas

Above: Eastern Mennonite University sponsored a "trash fashion" booth in the exhibit hall. Youth were encouraged to find "trash" to wear for glamour shots (left to right): Yessica Ambriz, Laura Penner and Daisy Cintara from First Mennonite Church, Reedley, Calif.

Trisha Handrich of mPress

Left: Participants in the children's choir wait their turn during the joint worship on July 2.

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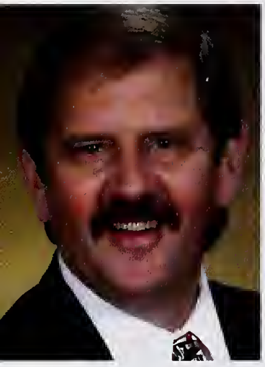

Everett J. Thomas

Empty sails

Mennonite Church USA is becalmed in unfamiliar seas and drifting toward dangerous shores. Even though there is no wind, it is time to put up our sails.

This is the metaphor Jim Schrag used in his final sermon to our denomination on July 1. He drew the example from a story about missionary Hudson Taylor who was sailing to China in the late 1800s.

Apparently, the ship on which Taylor booked passage was stranded near some islands in the Pacific Ocean. With no wind to keep them moving, the ship was drifting near some islands inhabited by cannibals.

Knowing that Taylor was a missionary, the captain asked him to pray for wind. But Taylor said he would do so only after the captain put up his sails. The captain did not want to look foolish in front of his crew by hoisting the sails when there was no wind. But he eventually did so, and a saving wind came along to carry the ship on toward its destination and away from danger.

Several speakers at Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 pointed out that the Old Testament word for spirit is the same as the word for wind. Schrag's point is that as a denomination we need to let our sails be filled with God's Spirit. It is a variation on the convention's theme, "Breathe and be filled." In this case, our sails as a national church need to be filled.

We wait for God's Spirit to fill our sails and get us moving.

Schrag's use of the metaphor is telling. As the executive director of Mennonite Church USA, he signaled that we are drifting on an ocean of uncertainty. The currents and tides of our culture are edging us close to dangerous shores. The solution: open ourselves to God's Spirit as an act of faithfulness. If we do so, God's Spirit will begin to move this ungainly ship toward its destination.

The metaphor can be unpacked even further, however. For example, what is our destination and who will alert us when land is in sight?

Schrag offered the answer to the second question in his address on June 30 during the first-ever Pastors' Day (see page 30). He contended in that address that it is the pastor of a congregation who sits in the ship's crow's nest (lookout) searching for land.

"[Pastors] have been called to a special place of vantage," Schrag said, "where the view really is longer, wider, broader and deeper."

But what is the destination?

Our biennial conventions include both formal and informal times to discern this together. At Convention 2009 we heard calls for several destinations. Whether we all agree on the same one is the final layer of the metaphor.

Jim Wallis, co-founder of *Sojourners*, suggested what he thinks should be our destination.

"Your best stuff is the right stuff," Wallis said during his sermon at the adult worship service on July 4. "As a friend of the family," Wallis said, "I urge you to not be shy about sharing your best stuff."

It has become common for planners of major denominational events to bring in respected outside speakers to tell us the Anabaptist message is what many other Christians yearn to hear. So is that the destination toward which we sail?

It has been 10 years since Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church delegates voted to create Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. A decade later—with all the hard work done of putting our new denomination together—we wait for God's Spirit to fill our sails and get us moving.—*ejt*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

Next issue of *The Mennonite* dated Aug. 18, 2009

As announced in our Nov. 18, 2008, issue, we will publish only one issue in August. However, our free weekly electronic magazine, called *TMail*, will continue to provide news every week. To subscribe to *TMail*, email AnnaG@themennonite.org or call 800-790-2498.

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Paraguay 2009 singing touches the soul

Ron Byler is interim executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

Mennonites are Mennonites the world over. When we get together, we want to sing. Last month, more than 5,800 Mennonites from all over the world gathered in Asunción, Paraguay, for the 15th assembly of Mennonite World Conference. Our global brothers and sisters came together to worship and fellowship with each other—and to sing.

One morning, when the lights went out during a worship service, what did we do? We sang.

I got the impression most participants would have gladly given up more of the time we spent listening to sermons and presentations to sing.

Paul Dueck, who grew up in Paraguay and now lives in Canada, led a wonderful worship band throughout the gathering. For many songs, we sang a verse in Spanish, a verse in English and a verse in the song's language of origin. By the end of the week, assembly goers were easily singing in several different languages.

And the singing didn't stop at the end of worship. One day after lunch, as I sat in a mostly empty auditorium, I hear (but did not see) the singing of an African choir in one of the balconies. What a beautiful sound it was to hear this choir fully fill the space in this auditorium!

"Praise, I will praise you, Lord," we sang one evening in worship. "Je louerai l'Eternel. In you, I will find the source of all my joy. Allelujah!"

I have told some of my pastor friends, only half jokingly, that we would be a better church if we sang more and preached less. There is something about music that connects with our souls in a way words seldom do.

A favorite song from the Zimbabwe 2003 world gathering, "Hakuna akaita," continued to enthrall those gathered in Asunción. "We ran everywhere, we turned round and round, we searched everywhere, but we found none like Jesus," we sang in Shona, French and English.

What is it about singing that brings us together? I discovered one reason as I sat in worship singing one evening: "God is there with you. El contigo siempre está. God is with you all the time."

That same evening we sang "Unity," a chorus by then Mennonite Jerry Derstine (now known in the secular world as J.D. Martin) that I first sang more than 30 years ago. "Leben hier in einigkeit. Jesus, help us live in unity." I found myself tearing up as the body of Christ around me sang as one.

One day we sang "Praise God From Whom" (606), and instead of making me feel culturally bound, as singing the song sometimes does, this time it was a wonderful release. A North American Mennonite tradition had something to contribute to this large body of Anabaptists.

Another song, written in Spanish by Canadian Bryan Moyer Suderman, showed the infusion of cultures present. Based on the Philippians 2 text for the week, we sang, "Tengán la mente de Cristo, quien por nosotros se ofreció. Let the same mind be within you as was in Jesus Christ."

Our Paraguay 2009 international songbook says it this way: "Many interpreters will be needed to help us understand each other. But there is one language that brings us together—music. We may not be able to speak each other's languages but we can sing each other's songs."

"Christo, eres el centro," we sang. "Jesus, be the center." As I sat day after day, listening to this music and singing with gusto, it was easier to see Jesus at the center, not only within this global body of Mennonites and Brethren in Christ but also within Mennonite Church USA congregations.

"Dalam Yesus kita bersaudara. In Jesus, we are brothers and sisters." Indeed we are. TM

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

TheMennonite

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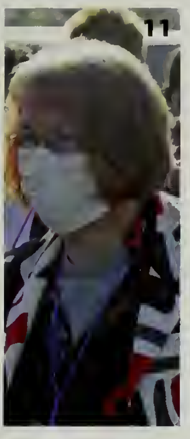

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

PinkMenno campaign crossed lines

Until now, the debate within Mennonite Church USA regarding full acceptance of noncelibate gays and lesbians has been between adult believers with sincere differences of opinion in how we interpret the Scripture with respect to God's mercy and righteousness.

However, at the recent churchwide convention held in Columbus, Ohio, the nature of the "dialogue" changed, and lines of appropriate behavior were crossed. The first line crossed was the PinkMenno campaign leaders holding a press conference for the secular media. In this action they appealed for support for their cause to those outside the church. Not only was this inappropriate, it also demonstrated a remarkable ignorance of Anabaptist-Mennonite history. We, of all people, have not been inclined to bow to the court of public opinion in matters of faith.

However, as the parent of participants in the senior and junior high and children's conventions, I was even more appalled to see the number of youth convention attendees, even children, decked out in the pink headbands, shirts, bracelets and the like provided to them by PinkMenno campaigners in their quest for support for their cause. There is great risk in drawing these emotionally and spiritually less mature individuals into this debate. We would all do well to be reminded of Christ's admonition in Luke 17:1b-2 (NIV): "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin."

I imagine that more than a few parents, youth sponsors and pastors will be concerned about this intrusion into their youths' convention experience.—*Don R. Martin, Harrisonburg, Va.*

PinkMenno campaign tactics immoral

I find it difficult to understand how the tactics used by the PinkMennos campaign fall under the category of "agreeing and disagreeing in love," as Mennonite Church USA has proposed. What's more, the blatant recruiting of vulnerable youth at the convention was nothing short of immoral. Can you imagine what we would have done if military recruiters had done the same thing? I believe we would have told them what our teaching position is and asked them to leave. Why didn't we have the conviction to do that in this case?

I would encourage our denominational leaders to consult with the racial-ethnic groups, the Anabaptist churches of the global South and any other Anabaptist groups that are growing (while we are declining) to see what their counsel is. I cry for the church I love if we allow the PinkMennos and their sympathizers to undermine our denomination and continually divert our attention away from bringing the kingdom of God on earth. Please don't let these groups "wear us down" with their subversive tactics.—*Nelson Shenk, Bally, Pa.*

Supports PinkMenno campaign

I have heard there are qualms regarding the overwhelming interest in the PinkMenno campaign at Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009. Though I did not have the opportunity to attend convention, I have heard positive reports of the convention as a whole and of the PinkMenno campaign in particular. This is an issue that needs our attention, and the enthusiasm of the youth indicates there is a lot of interest. The goal of the campaign at convention was to reopen healthy, affirming dialogue that respects many points of view.

I understand there are many in the denomination who do not agree with the stance of the campaign. But since they are not using aggressive or inappropriate actions but are simply interested in sharing in conversation, I urge all to support or at least allow the efforts of the campaign.—*Tara Hershberger, San Antonio, Texas*

Appreciated meaningful conversations

Attending the Mennonite Church USA convention, I spent most of my time in the exhibit hall at the MennoNeighbors booth, where our focus was on peace and justice issues. I felt overwhelming affirmation as I engaged in discussions with many people of all ages. *(Readers Say continues on page 31)*

IN THIS ISSUE

Members of Mennonite World Conference gather from around the world in an assembly every six years or so. This issue focuses on Assembly 15, held July 14-19 in Asunción, Paraguay. Four editors from Meetinghouse, an association of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ publications, worked together to cover this assembly. These included Dick Benner, editor of *Canadian Mennonite*, Dora Dueck, interim editor of *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, Gordon Houser, associate editor of *The Mennonite*, and Paul Schrag, editor of *Mennonite Weekly Review*. Meetinghouse also hired Lowell Brown of New York City to take photos. The stories and photos in this issue only provide a glimpse of what happened that week. For more, go to MWC's Web site, www.mwc-cmm.org. Or find someone from your community, if possible, who attended, and listen to their stories. MWC helps us realize we belong to a global family and that we are called to live in unity. That is no easy task, as our editorial emphasizes.—*Associate editor*

Formal response to PinkMenno campaign

The Mennonite Church USA Convention in Columbus, Ohio, was a time of celebration and challenge. Many, many people have expressed affirmation and gratitude for the convention as a whole.

Beyond this affirmation, which was the overall response, I want to acknowledge some aspects of the convention experience, primarily related to some activities of advocacy groups, that were not what we had hoped.

In one remarkable assembly in 1995, delegates of both the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church traditions met together and adopted the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love and our vision statement, Vision: Healing & Hope.

During the final session of the Delegate Assembly in Columbus, delegates adopted a resolution calling the church to find ways to be in dialogue with those who do not agree with parts of our Confession of Faith.

While we were trying to model a more open posture to diverse perspectives during the Columbus assembly, certain occurrences at Columbus were problematic, primarily ones related to the distribution of literature by people associated with a group calling itself PinkMennos. PinkMennos is a group that advocates for the full inclusion of lesbians and gays into the life and expression of our church.

Our convention staff did not authorize or approve this distribution of literature. When they learned about the unauthorized distribution of literature in the exhibit area, they repeatedly requested that this activity stop. These requests were followed for a time, but then [the literature distribution] continued again later in the week.

Some may have also read the Associated Press story in their local or regional newspaper that reported a one-sided and sometimes inaccurate view of our attempts within Mennonite Church USA, its conferences and its congregations to recognize and practice our commitment to be in dialogue when we disagree. Leaders of the Executive Board and its Executive Leadership staff do not accept the inaccurate account presented in the secular press.

The delegate body overwhelmingly (about 90 percent counted in a hand vote) passed a resolution that acknowledges the teaching of our Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, which states, "We believe God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life" (Article 19). The Columbus delegate statement also says, "We confess that we as a church (congregations, conferences, denomination) have rarely found a way to create a healthy, safe environment in which to have this dialogue, one that builds up the Body of Christ and is respectful and honest about our differences."

In our attempts to work with advocacy groups from within our denomination prior to the convention, we tried to establish expected patterns of conduct, but we acknowledge that, despite our best efforts to "agree and disagree in love" in this setting, what actually happened did not always meet our expectations, and our understandings were not honored.

We accept our part of the responsibility for some youth receiving unwelcomed and unauthorized literature or other incidents that may have brought offense or confusion to you or others in your congregation.

May God continue to have mercy on us and God's Spirit guide us, inviting us all to extraordinary patience and perseverance with each other in the midst of sincere disagreement and contrasting interpretation of Scripture.—*Jim Schrag, executive director, Mennonite Church USA*

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Mennonite World Conference should have its Assembly Gathered: (24 votes)

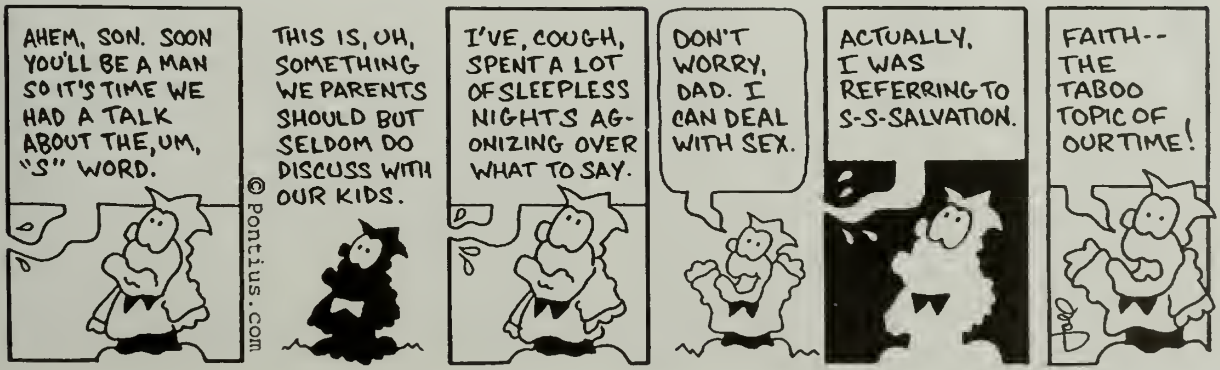
- ○ Once every six or seven years (58%)
- ○ More often than that (29%)
- ○ Less often (8%)
- ○ Not sure (4%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Readers Say continues on page 31.

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


AHEM, SON. SOON YOU'LL BE A MAN SO IT'S TIME WE HAD A TALK ABOUT THE, UM, "S" WORD.
THIS IS, UH, SOMETHING WE PARENTS SHOULD BUT SELDOM DO DISCUSS WITH OUR KIDS.
© Pontius.com
I'VE, COUGH, SPENT A LOT OF SLEEPLESS NIGHTS AGONIZING OVER WHAT TO SAY.
DON'T WORRY, DAD. I CAN DEAL WITH SEX.
ACTUALLY, I WAS REFERRING TO S-S-SALVATION.
FAITH-- THE TABOO TOPIC OF OUR TIME!

IN BRIEF

Lowell Brown

Miller caught in tight security

Security at Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15 in Asunción, Paraguay, was strict. People were not allowed on the grounds without their blue identity tags. Volunteers were so strict that at one meal on July 17, Larry Miller, general secretary of MWC—who had forgotten his ID tag—was denied entrance until someone proved to the volunteer who Miller was.—*Gordon Houser*

Dates set for Convention 2011

Mennonite Church USA's Convention 2011 will be held July 4-9 at the Pittsburgh Convention Center, the first fully LEED-certified convention center in the United States.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Youth Venture team denied entry in London

ELKHART, Ind.—Two Youth Venture teams traveling on July 16 encountered difficulties entering the United Kingdom. The first team, bound for Northern Ireland, was delayed and questioned but eventually allowed to enter the country. The second team, en route to Bradford, England, was questioned by immigration officials and denied entry at Heathrow International Airport in London.

Mennonite Mission Network staff are working with partners in the U.K. to understand why this happened and how it can be avoided in the future. Mission Network has been sending Youth Venture teams to the U.K. for 15 years without any previous difficulty. Participants on the Bradford team have been given a full refund for the trip.

Youth Venture, one of Mennonite Mission Network's Christian service programs, offers people ages 14-22 the opportunity to join teams for one to four weeks of service in June, July or August.
—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Christian Peacemaker Teams work in IDP camp

ZHARAWA, Iraq—Along the northeastern border of Iraq, Christian Peacemaker Teams has been working to amplify the voices of 137 Iraqi Kurdish families from the Pshdar District who are living in the Zharawa Internally Displaced People's camp, because Iran and Turkey bombed their villages.

Rows of United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees tents in the camp are crowded together and backed up against toilets and showers. Temperatures have already exceeded 100 degrees Fahrenheit and will only increase in the coming months. The IDPs have no electricity to refrigerate food and get their water from tanks brought in by the UNHCR.—*CPT*

Deborah Froese

Canadian youth assemble 5,000 school kits

On July 7, in Caronport, Sask., Mennonite Church Canada Youth Assembly participants assembled more than 5,000 school kits. That total will be matched by Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba, which will distribute the kits in Cuba. Erasers form the words, "Jesus Loves U."—*Mennonite Church Canada*

MCC had $8 million deficit in 2008-09 year

GOSHEN, Ind.—According to its annual report, Mennonite Central Committee received nearly the same income during its most recently completed fiscal year as it received during the 2007-08 fiscal year. However, expenses were $8 million more than the previous year. Those additional expenses contributed to an $8.3 million deficit as of March 31. Cash gifts from U.S. supporters totaled $13,221,000, which was down 1.6 percent from the previous year. Thrift shop and relief sale revenue was also down slightly, while income from government grants more than doubled, from $5.1 million to $10.4 million. Total income was $65.4 million and total expenses were $73.7 million.

Administration and fund-raising costs represented 18.5 percent of expenses. According to the report, MCC had 1,165 workers around the world as of March 31.—*Everett J. Thomas*

EMM send-off also honors trailblazers

LANCASTER, Pa.—On July 5, 400 people came to Lancaster Mennonite School to send off more than 50 long-term and short-term Eastern Mennonite Missions workers and honor past workers.

Anna Lois Charles and the late Raymond Charles received the Presidential Commitment Award for outstanding service. Raymond had been a past president of EMM, traveled extensively to visit workers around the world and taught Bible at Lancaster Mennonite School.

Glenn Kauffman, director of Global Ministries, presented the Rhoda E. Wenger Life Service Award to Lois Eshleman and the late J. Lester Eshleman.

Rhoda Lind and the late Wilbur Lind received the Elam W. Stauffer Pioneer Mission Award for displaying the same courageous pioneering spirit as Stauffer, who was EMM's first overseas missionary. The Linds were the first Mennonite missionaries to enter Somalia, where they worked for 16 years.

The Impact Award for Short-term Mission and Service, which honors those who have given them-

I am a Muslim
Please don't HATE me!

Scott Camil

inesville Mennonite church stands with Muslims

dullah Shah, age 5, holds a sign at the vigil at Emmanuel nnonite Church, Gainesville, Fla., to demonstrate solidarity th Muslims.—*Richard K. MacMaster*

selves to change the world through short-term missions and service, was presented to Jeryl Hollinger and Sam Thomas. Both men served in EMM's voluntary service program as participants and later as administrators.—*EMM*

Congolese, MC USA reps continue partnership

ASUNCIÓN, Paraguay—About 35 Mennonites from Congo and the United States gathered on July 17 during Mennonite World Conference in Asunción, Paraguay. Mennonite Church USA and two Mennonite conferences in Congo are forming a church-to-church relationship. Benjamin Mubenga, president of Communauté Evangélique Mennonite, and Adolphe Komuesa Kalunga, president of Communauté Mennonite au Congo, joined members of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board and a roomful of others from both countries. —*Mennonite Church USA*

Hondurans call for dialogue after coup

AKRON, Pa.—The Honduran Evangelical Mennonite Church is calling for peaceful dialogue and respect for human rights in Honduras in the wake of the June 28 coup that deposed President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales. In a July 6 statement in *Diario La Prensa*, the nation's largest-circulation newspaper, the church noted that the coup and the continuing political crisis have polarized Honduran society and have created a climate of violence and insecurity. The statement called upon Christians, government officials and society at large to resolve the crisis peacefully through dialogue. The text of the church's statement is available online at mcc.org/honduras.—*MCC*

Kansas church receives $24,000 from JoinHands

SALINA, Kan.—On July 12, Salina (Kan.) Mennonite Church received a check for $30,000 from Mennonite Men of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. The JoinHands Mennonite Church Building program, which Mennonite Men began in 1983, provides grants to congregations acquiring their first church building. Besides the $24,000 grant from JoinHands, an additional $6,000 grant from First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge, Kan., was added to make the $30,000.—*Western District Conference*

IN-MI churches to distribute $8,200 gift

GOSHEN, Ind.—On April 19, Blooming Glen (Pa.) Mennonite Church held a pancake breakfast to raise funds to benefit people in Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference congregations most affected by the economic recession.

Dan Miller, lead conference minister; Steve Slagel of East Goshen Mennonite; and Len Geiser of College Mennonite, Goshen; selected the following congregations to serve as distribution points for the $8,200: Rexton Mennonite and Naubinway Christian Fellowship, both in the Upper Peninsula, Mich.; Community Christian Fellowship Ministries, Detroit; Belmont Neighborhood Fellowship, Elkhart, Ind.; North Goshen Mennonite; and Howard-Miami and Parkview Mennonite churches, both in Kokomo, Ind. In most cases, the money will be used to purchase food supplies for pantries.—*Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference*

Youth win chance to donate at Bethel's booth

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—For the second convention in a row, Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., used funds designated for its youth convention display to encourage an ethic of service. Youth who stopped by the booth could help put together playground equipment to be given to FCI Academy Kindergarten Village in Columbus, Ohio. There was also a drawing to win the chance to designate $1,000 to a service organization. Three youth selected were from Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church; Harrisonburg (Va.) Mennonite Church; and University Mennonite Church, State College, Pa. The youth groups will decide which organizations will receive the money.—*Bethel College*

—*compiled by Anna Groff*

IN BRIEF

New *Gather 'Round* managing editor

Cyndi Fecher of Elgin, Ill., has been named the new managing editor of the *Gather 'Round* curriculum. Fecher brings her prior service as *Gather 'Round* project assistant from 2006 to 2007, along with experience serving as publications coordinator for Brethren Benefit Trust since Jan. 2 this year. Fecher began Aug. 3, working out of the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin. —*Mennonite Church USA*

Local Chinese pastor ordained

For the first time in 13 years the Macau Mennonite Church has a local Chinese leader as the lead pastor of the church. Treasure Chow was ordained at the church in a June 7 ceremony. Though she saw many things beyond her years growing up in the seedy waterfront area of Hong Kong, her mother's faith made a lasting impact on her. Chow was baptized after high school and attended a three-year Bible school program. In 1990, she and her husband moved as missionaries to serve local congregations and work with Industrial Worker Fellowship in Macau. —*Mennonite Mission Network*

Almost 6,000 Mennonites gather in Paraguay for Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15.

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Are you a Mennonite?" a policeman asked as Ditrich Pana approached the huge white church where 5,800 Anabaptists from around the world had gathered.

In Paraguay, Mennonites are known as fair-skinned, German-speaking farmers and ranchers who live in isolated colonies and produce much of the country's cheese.

Pana doesn't fit that profile. He is Enlhet, an indigenous group that—as much as it might surprise most Paraguayans—includes 6,000 Mennonites.

The Enlhet churches—and those of another indigenous group, the Nivacle—grew from mission work by Mennonite immigrants of Germanic and Canadian background who began arriving in Paraguay in the 1920s.

Together

by Paul Schrag

Pana, a radio evangelist, told how he answered his uniformed questioner: "Through the Holy Spirit I said, 'Yes, I am a Mennonite.'"

His story of claiming the Mennonite name as a label of faith rather than of ethnicity captured a leading theme of the 15th Mennonite World Conference assembly July 14-19 in Asunción, Paraguay.

Through the Holy Spirit I said, Yes, I am a Mennonite.—Ditrich Pana

In a sermon to the global Anabaptist gathering—which drew Mennonites and Brethren in Christ from 60 countries—Pana praised Christ's power to bridge the world's divisions.

"This gathering unites us with glad hearts," he said. "We belong to each other and to him [God] this week as brothers and sisters and friends."

In that spirit of unity, Paraguay's 32,000 Mennonites hosted a weeklong reunion of the 1.6-million-member global Anabaptist body.

MWC assemblies usually are held every six years but may be less frequent in the future (see box on page 11).

Of the 5,838 people who registered for the Asunción conference, 3,109 came from Paraguay, 766 from the United States and 730 from Canada. They gathered twice a day in the Centro Familiar de Adoración, a church with a three-level, 10,000-seat sanctuary in the final stages of construction by a Protestant congregation.

in faith

Family reunion: Mennonites from around the globe gather in Paraguay and greet old friends.

For worship services, the "platform language" was Spanish, so English speakers and others listened to translators through headsets.

They heard sermons and Bible study messages—under the theme "Come Together in the Way of Jesus Christ"—that emphasized living in unity and working for equality and justice, especially within the Anabaptist fellowship.

"Our conduct must reflect a change of thinking and attitude evidenced in how we relate to one another," said Danisa Ndlovu, bishop of the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe and the new MWC president, on Saturday night (July 18).

"This is a clarion call for mutual respect, acceptance and, above all, unity in the household of faith."

Songs in the dark

While sermons needed translation, music crossed language barriers—and turned a sudden difficulty into a joyful moment.

During Thursday morning's service (July 16), the sanctuary went dark while Clair Brenneman of Palmer Lake, Colo., was telling about the building of Paraguay's Trans-Chaco Road by Mennonite Central Committee Pax workers in the 1950s and early '60s.

Songleader Paul Dueck of Canada and his team of musicians bounded to the stage and led the congregation in "Allabare," "Grosser Gott, wir loben dich," "We are walking in the light of God" and other songs until power was restored.

On Wednesday morning (July 15), a poignant

Continued on page 10

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Forgiving a murderer: Ayoreo chief Jonoine holds the spear his father used to kill missionary Kornelius Isaak in 1958.

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Healing church wounds: Mennonite World Conference president Danisa Ndlovu (left) embraces Ishmael Noko of the Lutheran World Federation.

Continued from page 9

moment with historic overtones occurred when leaders of two global church bodies affirmed the healing of centuries-old wounds.

MWC President Ndlovu embraced Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, after Noko spoke of Lutherans' plans to renounce condemnations of Anabaptism in their 16th-century Augsburg Confession.

Lutherans' persecution and execution of Anabaptists "is a wound we carry with us," Noko said. "When you meet for your next assembly, we hope to be with you a new relationship."

Worshipers gave Noko a standing ovation.

Remarkably, Noko and Ndlovu are both from Zimbabwe.

"Divine providence has brought these [two leaders] together," said Larry Miller, MWC executive secretary.

Forgiving the murderer

Another gesture of reconciliation took place Sunday morning (July 19), when Helmut Isaak of Paraguay read a statement of forgiveness to the son of the man who killed his brother.

"More than 50 years ago, your clan and tribe were resisting us, but now we aren't enemies anymore but brothers in Christ," Isaak said to Jonoine, a chief of the Ayoreo tribe.

Jonoine came to the stage in native dress, carrying the spear his father used to kill missionary Kornelius Isaak in 1958.

About 8,500 people attended the Sunday service. Local Mennonite churches were closed and encouraged their members to participate.

In addition to the worship services, two workshop sessions were held each afternoon on topics such as violence against women and children in Congo and the shared convictions of global Anabaptists.

Special-interest groups, such as women theologians from Africa and Latin America, held meetings.

Many conference goers spent their free time at

'If I don't get paid, I can't say no'

Gordon Houser, *The Mennonite*

Ruthild Foth

Ruthild Foth, 75, from Ludwigshafen, Germany, attended her 11th Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly in a row. For most of those she worked as volunteer interpreter.

Her first MWC meeting was in Karlsruh, Germany, in 1952. The next one, in 1957 in Basel, Switzerland, was her first as a volunteer. In an interview on July 14, she said, "If I don't get paid, I can't say no." If MWC offered to pay her, she said, "I could say no because I don't need the money."

Next came Kitchener, Ont., in 1962, then Amsterdam, Netherlands, in 1967. Her plane was not allowed to land in Curitiba, Brazil, in 1972, so she went to Paraguay first. Next was Wichita, Kan., in 1978, then Strasbourg, France, where organizers put Foth in charge of coordinating the translations of information sheets each day.

In 1990 in Winnipeg, Man., Foth planned to attend as a tourist, but she was asked to interpret. Calcutta, India, in 1997 was her first since 1952 that she did not work as a volunteer. Then came Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, in 2003, then Asunción, her 11th MWC meeting.

Foth's father was a Mennonite, her mother a Baptist, and Foth grew up going to a Methodist Sunday school. But for most of her life she has been a member of the Mennonite congregation in Ludwigshafen, which began in 1702.—*Gordon Houser for Meetinghouse*

The future of Mennonite World Conference

Outgoing president of Mennonite World Conference Nancy Heisey of the United States and Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe, the new MWC president, led a workshop July 15 on the future of MWC.

They listed some benefits and costs of these assemblies. Ndlovu said, "Nothing replaces personal contacts."

Among the costs are the literal one of finances, said Heisey. After the 1990 assembly in Winnipeg, Manitoba, MWC had such a large deficit it took years to dig out. She added that it's complicated to get people together from around the world. About 200 MWC delegates to this assembly had their passports held by the Paraguayan ministry, she said. Sometimes diseases are a problem, and few from the global South can afford to come.

Heisey noted, however, that many in North America think assemblies is all that MWC does. She pointed out that MWC's executive committee meets annually, the General Council meets every three years, a koinonia delegation each year visits a member church somewhere around the globe, as well as organizing the Global Youth Summit, the MWC history project, ecumenical work and World Fellowship Sunday.

She reported that the General Council meets next in 2012 in Switzerland. At that time they plan to make decisions about the next assembly, which will likely be in 2017 or 18. They hope to hold an assembly in 2025, perhaps in Switzerland, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of MWC and the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Anabaptist movement.

"The key," Heisey said, "is how to make this living, breathing entity better."—*Gordon Houser for Meetinghouse*

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Global Village treats: Mennonites stood in long lines to buy ice cream from Lactolanda, a Mennonite-owned dairy.

the Global Village, an outdoor area featuring displays organized by continents. Global Village visitors stood in long lines to buy ice cream from Lactolanda, a Mennonite-owned dairy, and ate it with tiny spoons while listening to music at the outdoor stage.

Meals were served in the church's underground parking garage.

Due to health concerns, especially the need to guard against the H1N1 (swine flu) virus, some conference goers wore cloth coverings over their mouths, and volunteers sprayed disinfectant on people's hands before meals.

Activities for youth, including music and sports, took place in the "Teen Zone," a fenced field across the street from the church.

Before the assembly, a Global Youth Summit July 10-12 drew more than 700 participants, including 48 delegates from 32 countries.

MWC's governing body, the General Council, met and accepted four new national churches as MWC members: the Vietnam Mennonite Church, the Brethren in Christ Church in Mozambique, the Gilgal Mission Trust (Mennonite Church) in India and the Bible Missionary Church in Myanmar. (See story on page 19.)

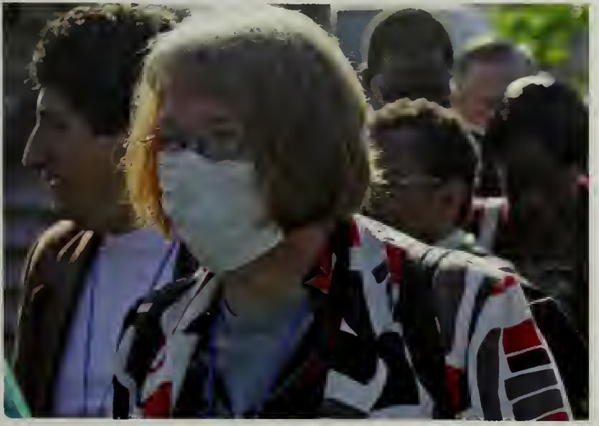
Council members elected Janet Plenert of Canada as vice president for a six-year term. Nancy Heisey of the United States ended her term as president.

The words of a young Nivacle woman may have summed up the assembly for many.

"I learned that God has different gifts for each of us," said Mirta Perez of Paraguay, reporting on the Global Youth Summit during a worship service.

"My dream is that the Mennonite family can remain in unity, because before God we are all the same, we are all valuable."

Paul Schrag is editor of Mennonite Weekly Review *and wrote this for Meetinghouse, a group of Mennonite editors.*



Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Swine flu: Some MWC attendees wore cloth masks as a precaution against the H1N1 (swing flu) virus.

Paraguayan Mennonite facts

- Mennonite churches have 32,000 members.
- Total Mennonite population is 60,000, or 1 percent of the nation's people.
- Eight Mennonite conferences officially hosted the MWC assembly—three German-speaking, two Spanish-speaking and three composed of the indigenous Enlhet and Nivacle groups.
- Other Anabaptist groups include Old Colony "horse-and-buggy" Mennonites, Old Order Amish, Beachy Amish and colonies independent of the conferences.
- Mennonite immigrants came first from Canada in 1927, then from the Soviet Union in 1930, again from Russia in 1947 as displaced survivors of World War II, again from Canada in 1948, and then from Mexico beginning in the 1960s.
- Mennonites are said to produce 80 percent of the country's dairy products.
- Former Paraguayan President Nicanor Duarte Frutos and his wife, Gloria, attend Raices Mennonite Brethren Church in Asunción.

Sources: Mennonite World Conference, *Like a Mustard Seed: Mennonites in Paraguay* by Edgar Stoesz (Herald Press)

A diary of worshi

Tuesday, July 14

by Gordon Houser

A procession of banners from congregations, conferences and other groups from around the world opened Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly 15 on July 14, with more than 5,000 in attendance at the new building of the Centro Familiar de Adoración. Worship leader Werner Franz of Paraguay read from John's vision in Revelation about the thousands around the throne of the Lamb and said, "This church is on the way."

MWC general secretary Larry Miller welcomed the diverse throng and noted that MWC members come from 101 countries. He introduced guests from other Christian traditions, including the Anglican Church, the Baptist Alliance, the Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation, the Methodist Churches, African Independent Churches, the Salvation Army, the World Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance.

Representatives from nine language groups stated the conference theme— "Come Together in the Way of Jesus Christ"—in their own languages.

Our love of church can be disruptive if it only seeks to protect our fences.—Nancy Heisey

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

In her keynote address, outgoing MWC president Nancy Heisey of the United States modeled the diversity of MWC by beginning her talk in Spanish, then telling a story in French before proceeding in English. She noted that humans are made for community and celebration, and "this gathering is like one of the many celebrations we take part in."

However, she said, noting the text of Philippians 2:1-11, having the mind of Jesus, who was killed, doesn't sound like a typical celebration. "The way of Jesus Christ does not begin with us ... but with God." In order to have the mind of Christ, she said, we must experience the love of God.

Anabaptists are called "to put our history in question" and be willing to look at our flaws. Though we may be delighted by our diversity, Heisey said, experiencing people who are different can be hard. "We don't experience Christ in the same way." There is no resting place for expanding God's love, short of God's kingdom, she said.

But love turns sour when it clings to sameness. "Our love of church can be disruptive if it only seeks to protect our fences," she said. "If a church fails to expand, it will perish."

Our work as a church must be grounded in God's love, Heisey concluded. She called people to celebrate but not cling to the blessings of these days. "Let us spread to the wind the blessings of this assembly," she said.

Heisey then introduced Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe as the incoming president of MWC and led a prayer of blessing on him for this work.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

'Peace requires dialogue'

Catholics and Mennonites are in dialogue in various places around the globe, according to a workshop July 17.

Gordon Houser, *The Mennonite*

Gregory Fairbanks of the Catholic Church talks with an attendee.

Neal Blough of France reported on a dialogue between Mennonite World Conference and the Roman Catholic Church's Pontifical Institute between 1998 and 2003. A report from that dialogue, "Called Together to Be Peacemakers," came out in 2003.

César Garcia of Colombia and Fernando Enns of Germany talked about how their churches used that report in their countries. Garcia offered a history of Catholics' harsh treatment of Protestants in Colombia. This report, he said, helped change that and led to further dialogue that has been productive.

Garcia and Enns both noted that "peace requires dialogue." Enns described some differences that came out of a meeting of Catholics and Mennonites in Rome. These related primarily to two areas: apostolic succession and baptism.

In answer to a question from participants, Gregory Fairbanks of the Pontifical Institute explained the meaning of the Eucharist to Catholics. It means more than the real presence of Jesus Christ. It also assumes the unity of the church. Fairbanks also said that this dialogue is important because "the division of the church is a sin."

Garcia and Enns both emphasized the need to contextualize the report. *—Gordon Houser for Meetinghouse*

and Bible study

Wednesday, July 15

by Dora Dueck

A moving gesture of reconciliation and strong preaching marked Assembly 15's first full day, Wednesday, July 15.

Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), addressed the gathering with a "heavy heart," he said, because of the "painful history" Lutherans and Mennonites share, especially the persecution—and execution—of Anabaptists in the 16th century.

"This history of condoning persecution," he said, "is a spiritual wound we carry around in us." He further described the condemnations of Anabaptists, contained in the "anathemas" of the Augsburg Confession, as "the poison of a scorpion." The Anabaptists did not strike back, he said.

Mennonites and Lutherans have been in dialogue about these matters. At their next meeting, the LWF will be asked "to take action that will put us in a new position to the anathemas and express our deep repentance and regret."

The assembled Mennonites stood and applauded, and MWC president Danisa Ndlovu said, "What we have heard will change our lives and perspectives."

"We are witnessing the breaking of walls," he continued. "We are ready to receive the words we have heard." The two men then embraced.

These representatives of Anabaptists and Lutherans are both from Zimbabwe. In fact, Noko's mother was a Brethren in Christ woman who married a Lutheran.

The way of Christ: If this exchange exhibited "the way of Jesus Christ"—the day's theme—the Bible invited its exposition. Elfriede Verón, instructor at Instituto Biblico Asunción, went through Philippians 2:1-11, verse by verse, considering its exhortations to unity and Jesus' way, as seen in his relinquishment, humility and obedience.

Nzuzi Mukawa, professor at the School of Missiology and pastor of a Mennonite Brethren church in Kinshasa, DR Congo, further developed the theme in a passionate sermon on Micah 6:1-8. "We follow Jesus Christ," he said, "through the practice of social justice."

Repeating the phrase "listen to me carefully," Mukawa rolled out a range of issues in which the church is called to "live justice."

Mukawa urged the church to ordain women, accept minority group leadership, "rise up and defend" children, support women suffering from sexual violence and act on behalf of poor countries by eliminating their international debt, granting more access to trade and by rich countries paying damages for pollution.

Six months by bicycle: Wilma Bailey of the United States talked about caring for God's creation. "We think it's all about us," she said. "It's not about us but for the pleasure of God."

Sandra Rincon of Colombia reported on the activities of Christian Peacemaker Teams, reminding people that "nonviolence is a real option."

Two young Americans, Lars Åckerson and Jon Spicher, who spent the past six months getting to Assembly 15 from Harrisonburg, Va., by bicycle, told the audience stories.

They discovered "incredible hospitality" and good everywhere they went, Åckerson and Spicher said. As they crossed the U.S.-Mexico border at "a highly volatile time," a white van followed them slowly. Approaching them, the driver offered them a piece of pizza. The pizza was delicious, they said, and seemed to be "a sign from God" to give up their prejudices and fears.

Dora Dueck is acting editor of Mennonite Brethren Herald.

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

We follow Jesus Christ through the practice of social justice.
—Nzuzi Mukawa

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Elfrieda Verón

BIENVENIDOS / WELCOME
Cumbre Mundial de la Juventud - GYS
Paraguay 2009

Ray Dirks for MWC

Six months on bikes: Lars Åkerson and Jon Spicher arrive in Asunción on July 9.

Thursday, July 16

by Dick Benner

Rejecting patriarchal models of church leadership and calling for more interdependence and dialogue in the Anabaptist community, three Latin American women theologians made a bold statement of solidarity with women leaders in the global Mennonite church in Thursday evening's session, July 16.

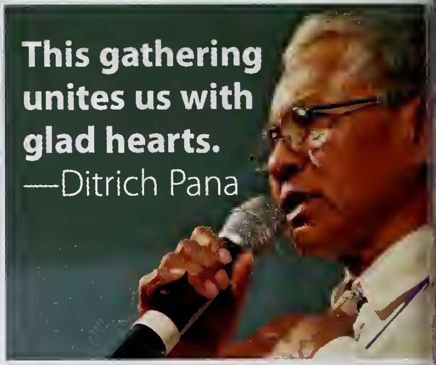
"We base our actions on the liberating message of Jesus Christ," said Ofelia Garcia Herandez, president of the Mennonite Church in Mexico and a member of the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) General Council, in a formal statement. "We affirm Anabaptist unity from a different perspective," she said, hoping to become a prophetic voice that denounces leadership abuse and lifestyle choices that perpetrate male dominance.

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Antonio González

At the same time, added Alix Lozano Forero, president of the Mennonite Church of Colombia and also a member of the General Council, "we want to walk together with our male counterparts in a spirit of discernment." Joining them was Olga Piedrasonta, co-director of the Latin American Peace Network.

In his morning Bible study, Antonio González, a former Jesuit who teaches theology in Madrid, rejected the Greek understanding of "glory" in John 17 as "praise" and chose the Hebrew definition of receiving a significant gift from God.


Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

This gathering unites us with glad hearts.
—Ditrich Pana

"Glory has more to do with loyalty than with what we receive from each other," he taught. It is what we give to others, as God gave it to Jesus so that the "Father would be glorified." The purpose of this process, he said, is to build up unity in the body of Christ, his church. It is our challenge to make this glory known to our neighbors.

Continuing the theme of unity in Acts 2, Ditrich Pana, an Enlhet church leader from the Chaco active in radio evangelism, said in his evening address, "This gathering unites us with glad hearts." The apostles showed us a high-level model of unity by sharing all their possessions because they didn't think they owned anything, he said. He urged that model on Christians as we unite on a global scale.

Earlier, Claire Brenneman of Palmer Lake, Colo., recalled the building of the 250-mile Trans-Chaco road in the 1950s and '60s. The five-year project enlisted the volunteer labor of 1,700 young men from 40 countries. The highway gave the isolated country a way for their farmers to get their food to market. Today more than half the population uses the road to get from north to south.

All this happened in the days before tight security measures, he said, and told of a Pax man from South Dakota who heard of all the good hunting in Paraguay. "He boarded the plane in Philadelphia with his shotgun and rifle," Brenneman said.

Dick Benner is editor of Canadian Mennonite.

Singing each other's songs

For many people, singing together was an Assembly 15 highlight. For the man who led that singing, it was the highlight of his life.

Gordon Houser, *The Mennonite*

Paul Dueck

"It's a dream come true," says Paul Dueck. Beyond the thrill of music making, he says, was "the thrill of seeing our brothers and sisters from around the globe singing each other's songs."

Dueck is music minister at United Mennonite Church and music teacher at United Mennonite Educational Institute, both in Leamington, Ontario. He is also a harpist with three recordings to his credit.

Though Canadian, Dueck was born in Asunción to Mennonite missionary parents and lived there 12 years. He returned to the country as an adult, with Linda, his wife, and their family, for two separate stints of teaching at CEMTA, a Mennonite seminary in Asunción.

The energetic Dueck moved easily at Assembly 15 among the three languages he speaks fluently—Spanish, English and German. He also moved from leading on the stage front to leading behind the piano or harp.

The music committee had debated creating a songbook for the event, since many do not read notes but decided to because a book collection can be enjoyed further at home. This assembly's songbook, however, had half as many songs. As editor, Dueck made sure a good portion of its 44 songs were in Spanish.

His other main task was to put together the team of international singers, instrumentalists and composers that helped him lead the twice-daily worship sessions.—*Dora Dueck for Meetinghouse*

Multination congregational profile

Sociologist-researcher Conrad Kanagy told an MWC workshop in Paraguay that what is called the Multi-Nation Anabaptist Profile 1 has several objectives. Foremost among them is to give voice to the southern hemisphere churches.

The profile "will give us a baseline against which to measure future growth and change among these churches," he said.

That growth has been phenomenal in the last 20 years, said Richard Showalter, president of Eastern Mennonite Missions, the sponsor of the multination study. "These churches have much to teach us in North America," he said, noting that western churches need this data for their own development and self-awareness. "There has been more interconnectedness over the last years than we in the North have noticed."

Kanagy and Showalter said the profile will help answer who we are as Anabaptists.—*Dick Benner*

Friday, July 17

by Gordon Houser

At the morning session on July 17, worship leader Werner Franz announced that a bomb had exploded in Jakarta, Indonesia, killing nine and injuring 80, including a Mennonite.

Representatives from AMIGOS reported to the assembly about the Global Youth Summit held July 10-12. A choir of young people sang a song composed at the summit. A choir from Switzerland also performed.

The focus of this day's worship services was "Serving Like Christ."

In her Bible study, Jenny Neme, who is director of a center for peace and justice in Bogotá, Colombia, and works with street children, focused on Isaiah 58:1-10. In this text, she said, God underlines the need to name injustices, to ask how these happened and who is responsible.

God invites Isaiah and us, she said, to "act in spite of our fears." We often ignore the violence around us until it touches us. "Our relationship with God has to be transparent," she said, and must show itself in actions.

Neme noted the huge gap between those who have and those who don't and called people to close that gap. "Obeying God involves spirituality and action," she said, and helps heal wounds.

In her sermon that evening, Elizabeth Soto, a member of Mennonite Church USA who grew up in Puerto Rico, noted that Mennonites do much service, and people talk about what Mennonites do. "But we haven't matched Jesus' beautiful service," she said, as seen in Mark 10:35-45.

Before this text, she said, Jesus has talked about divorce, children and his death. Then these brothers come and ask to sit beside him in his kingdom. Jesus tells them they must walk the walk he walked, she said. "Jesus knows that serving means being in solidarity with those who are rejected and fallen."

Soto described two experiences of being in solidarity. In 2000, she was visiting displaced churches in Colombia when an army surrounded the village. They felt the same terror that these villagers lived with each day.

She also described working in a women's shelter in Elkhart, Ind., which took her "beyond her comfortable Mennonite world." She learned it was not just women in the street who were suffering but women in the pews of our churches as well.

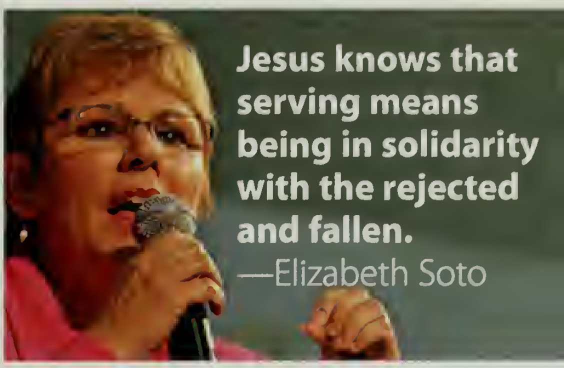
Soto mentioned Mennonite worker Susan Classen, who wrote about the spirituality of service that goes beyond doing to being. "The beginning point is not the task but our connection with God," Soto said. We are to be an instrument in God's hands and walk with those who suffer.

Jesus gave dignity to others, she said, and so should we.

When we serve, there's a struggle for power. "Many of us want to be in the position of those who serve," Soto said. We should ask ourselves what motivates us, she said.

God calls us to serve, she concluded, but with a spirituality that stops to evaluate. She prayed that we learn to walk humbly with others, as Jesus did.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.



Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Jesus knows that serving means being in solidarity with the rejected and fallen.
—Elizabeth Soto

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Jenny Neme

Interpreters: 'The better you do, the less you're noticed'

The dimly lit booth tucked into a balcony at the Centro Familiar de Adoración doesn't hold much: a table and chairs, a pair of microphones, a bottle of water, a few sticky notes stuck to the window, a bilingual Bible and Carmen Epp, listening intently through headphones to the sermon being delivered in Spanish below. Few are aware she's there, but hundreds of English speakers depend on her ability to listen, interpret and talk at the same time.

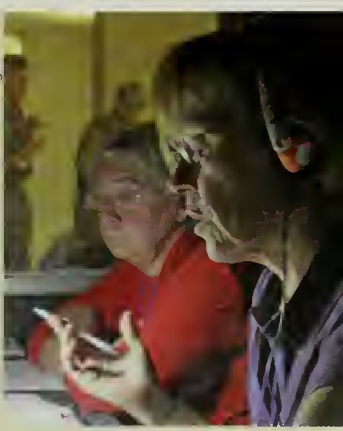
Epp was one of about 125 interpreters who volunteered to translate between Spanish and French, German, English, Portuguese, Nivacle, Guarani and Enlhet on stage, in the booths and at workshops and meetings during the assembly.

"It's a high calling, but also a humble ministry," Rebecca Yoder Neufeld says of the demanding job. "The better you do, the less you're noticed. If you're doing the job really well you fade into the background." Yet without it, "all the careful preparation done for this assembly would pretty much come to nothing," she says.

Yoder Neufeld, a Canadian born in France who's familiar with all four MWC official languages, coordinated the interpreters for Asunción and the last assembly in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, as well as smaller gatherings in between.

This was the first MWC assembly in memory at which English was not an official platform language, which meant many North Americans and English-speaking Africans and Asians were learning for the first time what it's like to depend on headsets. A company in neighboring Argentina provided the equipment, and close to 2,400 headsets were dispensed before each session by young volunteers.

But for Neufeld and Paraguay coordinator Jacob Lepp, the job began 18 months earlier, with recruiting, screening and training volunteers who had never interpreted simultaneously before.—*Doreen Martens for Meetinghouse*



Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Interpreters at Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15

Saturday, July 18

by Paul Schrag

Worshipers celebrated Communion and heard a call for unity, humility and selflessness by MWC's new president.

Danisa Ndlovu, bishop of the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe, who began his term as president during the assembly, spoke on the conference's theme text, Philippians 2:1-11.

Ndlovu said the church must banish selfishness to attain unity in Christ. It is easy to group ourselves by nationality, economic status, race or denomination and "without realizing it pursue selfish interests," he said. "Let us therefore be warned and stand our guard against the enemy, the devil himself, the father of self-interests."

He called selfishness a killer disease and humility the key to harmony. "Our conduct must reflect a change of thinking and attitude evidenced in how we relate to one another," Ndlovu said. "This is a clarion call for mutual respect, acceptance and, above all, unity in the household of faith."

After the sermon, worshipers shared bread and juice in observance of the Lord's Supper.

In the Saturday morning worship service, an Anabaptist theologian from New Zealand said Christians who want to make peace need to start by putting their own house in order.

"We will never be credible as peacemakers in a violent world unless, within our own Christian congregations, communities and families, we make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," said Chris Marshall, a professor at the University of Wellington.

Unity is the starting point for all the church's witness to the world, said Marshall, who formerly was involved in leadership at London Mennonite Fellowship.

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Our conduct must reflect a change of attitude in how we relate to one another.
—Danisa Ndlovu

"The oneness of the church is every bit as essential to the Christian faith as the oneness of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ," he said.

Unfortunately, Marshall said, the church sometimes is as crippled by conflict as the rest of the world. Nothing is more damaging to the cause of Christ than a divided church.

"The unity of the church is not something we manufacture by being unusually nice to one another," he said. "It is something that already exists. It is an objective reality, brought into being by the Spirit of God."

Marshall said four qualities—humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance—make it possible to overcome every conflict.

Also that morning, Nguyen Quang Trung, president of the 8,000-member Vietnam Mennonite Church, told of the church receiving legal recognition from the government. An MWC delegation participated in a celebration of that milestone last November.

Paul Schrag is editor of Mennonite Weekly Review.

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Chris Marshall

Music: Grupo Ebenezer, one of many groups performing at Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15

Gordon Houser, *The Mennonite*

Finding home: People at the Global Village marked their home countries with pins.

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Unity: Worshipers shared Communion Saturday evening.

Sunday, July 19

by Dick Benner

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

Jesus needs you to love. —Alfred Neufeld

In a moving symbolic peace gesture toward the indigenous Ayoreo people of the Chaco, Helmut Isaak read a statement of forgiveness to the son of the murderer of his brother, Kornelius Isaak, during the three-hour closing worship service on Sunday, July 19.

The Ayoreo man, now a chief of his tribe in the northern Chaco, came to the stage in his native dress, carrying the spear that killed Isaak in 1958, when a delegation of Mennonite missionaries were trying to win over the Ayoreos. As a young warrior, the father of the chief had speared Kornelius Isaak.

"More than 50 years ago, your clan and tribe were resisting us," said Helmut Isaak, in a statement of forgiveness, "but now we aren't enemies anymore but brothers in Christ," he said to the applause of some 8,500 worshipers, the largest gathering of the five-day assembly.

In his closing message to the assembly, Alfred Neufeld, a Mennonite theologian and author born in Paraguay, said, "Jesus needs you to love." Christians are not only members of the church of Christ," he said, "we need to be lovers of the church of Christ."

He warned against trusting ideologies and politics rather than Jesus Christ, to whom God has given all authority in heaven and earth. But we have to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." This process is not magical, or a given, he said, but an act of obedience, a labor of love that reaches out, like Jesus did, to the "most marginalized of our society."

He said to attach "working out one's personal salvation" to a congregation, a place of safety and from which the Christian can draw strength. "The world will know us by our helping of one another inside this community of faith," he said.

A delegate from Siberia brought greetings from a small 100-member Mennonite group located in a small Russian village where they converse in Low German. "Arriving by way of Canada," he said, "I never knew there were so many Mennonites."

Swelling the numbers of those attending the morning worship were local Mennonites who came to the morning worship rather than conduct their own Sunday services. The event was originally planned to be an outdoor service, but the threat of inclement weather kept the service inside the 10,000 capacity assembly hall.

Dick Benner is editor of Canadian Mennonite.

Giant cooker assists feeding of the thousands

When Adelheid Thiessen agreed to head the mammoth task of preparing 10 meals for 5,800-plus assembly participants, she knew the menu would have to be simple. She'd also need an awfully big cooking pot.

Originally from Menno Colony but living the last 25 years in Asunción, Thiessen found her mind turning to the big iron kettles her foremothers used in the Chaco. She envisioned a huge, propane-fueled cooking vat that would be custom built at the assembly site. But there would be no time to test it with anything but water before the event began. It had to work.

Worried about the design, she gave a testimony at her congregation, Concordia Mennonite Brethren Church, expressing her concerns. After the service a man came forward with a new idea: to divide the oval-shaped vat into four chambers, with two half-moons on each end and two rectangular sections in the middle. Rice and pasta could be cooked in the outer ends, while sauces went in the middle.

The vat became the centerpiece of the tent-covered cooking area outside the Centro Familiar de Adoración facility. Additional food preparation, baking and meat roasting—more than 2,000 kg/1,000 lb. of beef at a time—was done off-site.

"We had hoped to contract out the baking, but that didn't work out at the last minute," Thiessen said. "So we said, well, if Jesus closes one door, he will open another."

She called another local bakery, which offered its space for free.

In addition to her husband, Edwin, who organized the dining area on the first parking level inside the CFA, Thiessen was assisted by co-leaders Hans and Nancy Teichgräf plus a host of volunteers, mostly from the Chaco.

With 12 serving stations staffed by 60-plus volunteers, the entire assembly crowd could get their food in less than an hour. Seating was only available for some 2,000, so everyone was asked to spend no more than 20 minutes eating and then move elsewhere for extended conversation.

Most meals featured a sauce of chicken or ground beef served over rice or noodles with crusty rolls, locally-sourced oranges or bananas and bottled water, sometimes with a salad of shredded cabbage with cucumbers or carrots. Paraguayan Mennonites are famed for their beef and dairy production, and roast beef and yogurt also appeared during the week, as did the local staple root vegetable, mandioca (also known as manioc or yucca). Snacks included meat empanadas (turnovers), tea sandwiches and pastries.

Businesspeople but not food service professionals, the Thiessens previously had never cooked for a group larger than their 500-member church.—*Cathleen Hockman-Wert for Meetinghouse*

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

The entire assembly crowd could get their food in an hour.

Thirty good seconds on Saturday

David Boshart is lead pastor of West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa, and a member of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board.

A Chicago-based PBS station, WTTW, airs a well-known Sunday evening broadcast, "Thirty Good Minutes on Sunday." The program invites insightful and creative preachers to offer a sermon followed by a brief interview. I occasionally listen to these provocative sermons online. They often speak a new word into my experience of reality. After all the high points and some tension points in Columbus, Ohio, 30 good seconds on Saturday stand out to me as most memorable. They were 30 seconds of silent listening and discernment at the end of Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009.

Structuring the agenda for a general assembly is no easy task. When I was a kid and my father saw me drinking a bottle of pop, he often said, "That's like putting a quart in a pint."

Get-ting all the agenda into the schedule for a meeting that happens every two years feels the same. The listening committee received consistent affirmation for the leadership our moderators provided during these sessions.

Over the course of the convention, a holy longing among the delegates became palpable to the listening committee. By the end of the week, this longing developed into a strong and consistent theme: the sequential activity of receiving reports early in the week and making up-or-down decisions on resolutions with the clock running down seemed out of kilter with the kind of discernment that our daily discipline of Dwelling in the Word patterned for us. I took this unsettledness as a sign that a missional culture—centered in the discipline of spiritual discernment—is slowly emerging among us unawares and calling for a new way to do our business.

For our final report, the listening committee engaged the delegates in a final experience of discernment. We asked the delegates to spend 30 seconds in silence listening to the Spirit and asking whether they would characterize their overall experience best by offering an affirmation, words of counsel or a recommendation. We then gave the delegates the remaining time to craft a common statement from their table of affirmation, counsel or a recommendation they wanted to offer the Executive Board in 50 words or less.

Though there were some high moments and low moments, it was during those 30 seconds of silence and the discernment that followed that our church came in closest contact with its missional identity. The feedback from table groups had strong and consistent themes, the bulk of which fell in the category of affirmations.

We need to spend time listening to what the Spirit is saying to the church and invite the emerging sense to inform our business.

There was strong and consistent affirmation that this is the church to which these delegates want to belong. As one table group reported, "We affirm that this is the church we want to be a part of and want our children to be a part of. It must continue to be a discerning church open to the counsel of all parts, both inside the delegate hall and outside." There was strong affirmation for worshipful work and Dwelling in the Word. "We … see our church poised to be attractive to other people and other Christians. We experienced respect for differences and sensitivity to those on the margins." Or in the words of another table, "We affirm the Christ-centered nature of delegate meetings, exemplified by worship/song and Dwelling in the Word studies, reminding us of our unity and commonality." Also among the comments was the call for more substantial discernment: "We need a setting to discuss difficult issues. This format where we only have 10 minutes to share or dialogue doesn't work."

These 30 good seconds on Saturday provided provocative insights. One of the important learnings is that to be a missional people means we will not do business as usual or in models adopted from the world. We need to spend time listening to what the Spirit is saying to the church and invite the emerging sense to inform our business. Even taking 30 seconds to "breathe in" can dramatically reframe what is happening as the voice of the Spirit emerges in our midst. TM

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Our Sunday school**—Robert Kreider
- **A mentor makes a difference**—Wilma Gundy

MWC has new president, vice president

A woman represents Africa for first time; Miller concludes service in 2012.

What's new with Mennonite World Conference (MWC)? A new president and vice president; a new General Council and Executive Committee, with a woman representing Africans for the first time; new member churches, including the Mennonite Church in Vietnam; a growing involvement of young people; a new treasurer from Paraguay; a revised constitution and four new commissions ready to work.

The business of MWC was done by its General Council and Executive Committee at meetings held in Asunción in conjunction with MWC's global Assembly 15, July 14-19.

Danisa Ndlovu from Zimbabwe, who was vice president for six years and president-elect for three, was installed as president of MWC for six years. He succeeds Nancy Heisey of Harrisonburg, Va. Janet Plenert from Canada was elected vice president for six years.

The General Council elected a new Executive Committee from its members, with two people nominated by each continental caucus and affirmed by the Executive Committee. For the first time, the African Caucus chose a woman, Mawangu Biavula Ibanda from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as one of its representatives. The second African is Thuma Hamukang'andu from Zambia.

Other Executive Committee members elected are those from Asia: Prem Prakash Bagh, India, and Adi Waludjo, Indonesia; Latin America and the Caribbean: Edgardo Sanchez, Argentina, and Felix Rafael Curbello Valle, Cuba; Europe: Rainer Burkart, Germany, and Markus Rediger, Switzerland; North America: Iris de Leon-Hartshorn, United States, and Ron Penner, Canada.

The first action of the new Executive Committee, which met on July 19, was to accept by consensus a report from AMIGOS, the young adult team, and its nominations for a Youth Task Force to operate for one year.

Four national churches were accepted as full members of MWC. In addition to the Vietnam Mennonite Church, new members are the Brethren in Christ Church in Mozambique, the Gilgal Mission Trust (Mennonite Church) in India and the Bible Missionary Church in Myanmar.

For the first time, management of MWC's finances has moved to the global South with the appointment of Ernst Bergen from Paraguay as treasurer. Paul Quiring from California concluded 11 years as treasurer at the Asunción meeting.

During the past decade, MWC's income, investments and expenses have increased dramatically to approximately $1.2 million at the end of 2008, with positive fund balances. Assembly 15 finances are not yet final.

The General Council has about 116 members named by member and associate member churches. Approximately 50 percent of the new General Council (GC16) were also members of GC15. Work completed by GC15 included adopting a revised constitution.

Discussion between MWC and the Global Mission Fellowship concluded with the formation of the MWC Mission Commission. The chair of the commission, Richard Showalter from the United States, was elected in Asunción. He also chairs the related GMF, whose planning committee is responsible for global mission events.

The General Council also approved the merger of MWC's Asia Caucus and the Asia Mennonite Conference, which the AMC had already ratified. Within MWC, this body will be known as the Asia Caucus; for programs and communication within Asia, it will be known as Asia Mennonite Conference.

Lutheran World Federation representatives reported that the LWF Council plans to present a statement on the final report of the MWC-LWF Joint Study Commission at its 2010 world assembly. The statement is expected to ask for forgiveness of Lutheran persecution of Anabaptists in the 16th century.

For the first time, management of Mennonite World Conference's finances has moved to the global South with the appointment of Ernst Bergen from Paraguay as treasurer.

There is strong support for continuing global assemblies. A study is underway to determine the time and place for the next global gathering.

Already a major celebration is anticipated in Europe in 2025, the 500th anniversary year of the beginning of the Anabaptist movement and MWC's 100th anniversary.

The next General Council meeting will take place in May 2012 in Switzerland in conjunction with Mennonite European Regional Conference.

In May 2012, Larry Miller will conclude 22 years as general secretary of MWC.—*Ferne Burkhardt of Mennonite World Conference*

CPT trainings attempt to 'undo' sexism

Christian Peacemaker Teams members learn to shift focus from white men.

Photo provided

From left, CPTers Eloy Garcia, Sylvia Morrison and Jessica Phillips make ice cream together.

When Christian Peacemaker Teams works with a local partner or a supporting church, individuals sometimes make false assumptions about who is in charge.

"For instance, they might assume that an older white man is the person to address," says Carol Rose, CPT co-director. "To work well as teammates, it is the people who are given the privileges by systems of oppression who need to take initiative to shift the focus."

This is one example of how CPT urges the people of privilege on their teams to "undo" oppressions around them. This encouragement occurs in CPT's "undoing sexism and racism" training, which also educates team members about how to serve as allies to others in situations of sexual harassment and oppression.

Rose quotes Harley Eagle of the Mennonite Central Committee Anti-Racism Program to explain the program: "Awareness building of intersections of oppressions and intentional work in efforts to address the oppressions at their intersections."

Work undoing oppressions is "homework ahead of time," Rose says, and is important for team's health in situation of high stress.

"The contexts where we work in war zones are incredibly stressful," Rose says. "Human beings need a lot of support in order to act out of their best selves when under stress."

Another example of "undoing sexism" often occurs during brainstorming meetings in teams. When the team ignores a woman's idea but listens when a man who provides a similar idea, the man should publicly give credit to the woman, says Rose. If that doesn't happen, anyone in the group can acknowledge that the woman had the idea and the man has the opportunity to apologize.

After that, Rose says, it's important for all members on the team to move on and "acknowledge we all fall short of perfection."

The undoing sexism trainings began as a half-day training, which quickly grew into full-day training, within the rest of the CPT team training. Mini-training modules include undoing heterosexism and undoing Christian Anti-Semitism.

Two major incidents led CPT to implement this training: First, CPT experienced a sexual harassment case in 2003.

"We added the undoing sexism workshop in 2004 as a result of looking at learning from that situation," she says.

A second incident that led to the undoing oppressions work involved understanding how oppressions within CPT have negatively affected underrepresented racial/ethnic people and women, especially young women. "It's a problem throughout all the church," Rose says.

During the undoing sexism training, participants gather for a men's and a women's caucus. The men look at their male privilege and write a list of commitments to undo their privilege. The women's caucus group usually writes a list of what they, the women in CPT, want the men in CPT to respond to.

Susan Mark Landis, peace advocate for Mennonite Church USA, participated in the training in March as a member of the CPT steering committee. As a group, the men listed the ways they benefited from sexism in the past. As individuals, the women listed ways sexism affected them. "On the one hand, this was a powerful exercise," she says. "On the other, I was in tears—as were other women.

"I don't know that the CPT event is at all what Mennonite Church USA people need," Landis says. "The more important point is that we not only need to admit that our institutions are rampant with sexism but that we need to deal with it, not once but many times."

Rose acknowledges that training and policies themselves do not end oppression. But training connected with policies and an increased awareness throughout an organization to name problems does make a difference, she says.

"Certainly there are more women in roles of leadership than five years ago," Rose says.

Rose says CPT as an organization is relatively new, and this newness serves as an advantage. "We have started with women and men designing this thing together," she says. "Where there are gifts that come of this, other organizations are welcome to use them."—*Anna Groff*

Our institutions are rampant with sexism … we need to deal with it, not once but many times.
—Susan Mark Landis

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

Third Culture Kids hold first reunion

Several generations of TCKs represented among the 50 participants.

For most people, home is where they were born and raised. However, a Third Culture Kid (TCK)—someone who has spent significant time living in two or more cultural worlds—usually finds that the answer to this question is complicated.

TCKs who grew up in Congo and Botswana with parents working with Congo Inland Mission/Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, gathered June 26-28 for the first AIMM Missionary Kids' Reunion at Grace Church, Morton, Ill.

Tim Bertsche—a TCK who grew up in Congo and later served as a missionary with his wife and children in Botswana—organized the event.

Several generations of TCKs were represented among the 50 participants, who traveled from places as diverse as Midland, Texas; Apple Valley, Calif.; Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., and various midwestern locations.

Exchanges took place in small gatherings around tables during the weekend. On June 27, participants joined in a group reflection about how TCKs who left Africa and settled in North America experienced this transition. Comments revealed the depth of struggle in the search for belonging.

"For many years I never felt at home anywhere," said one participant. "I lived with anguish and hopelessness." Another participant, after nine years of teaching in the United States, still struggles to belong.

Several TCKs related their experiences as they discovered ways to cope. Some emphasized the need to return to their African roots as adults, to revisit people and places as a way to find healing and to better integrate the "African part" of themselves.

Others have found that continued involvement in mission, including international living or significant contact with people from other countries, allows TCKs to stay in touch with parts of themselves that were nourished on African soil.

Part of home for many TCKs includes living deeply held values, such as welcoming the stranger, and consistently working in church and community to cross racial and cultural divides.

One participant, having moved to North America, started to raise a family and embarked on a teaching career. One day, while cleaning up the house, he came across a trunk full of precious objects brought from his boyhood Congolese home.

The sight of those objects opened up something that had been buried deep within his soul, he said. He went to his wife and family and said, "It's time."

Photo provided

From left: Lee Rocke, Judy Schwartz Good and Carolyn Harder Voth converse at the reunion.

The family ended up spending seven years in southern Africa serving African Independent Churches.

Issues of home remained the focus as Jim Bertsche, longtime mission worker in Congo and then home office executive secretary with CIM/AIMM, spoke to the group.

Acting as the voice for many missionary parents, he acknowledged the pain TCKs felt as the parents sent them off at a young age to boarding schools in order to provide them with as good an education as possible.

"We know this was difficult and caused the stress and anxiety of separation for you," he said. "I just want you to know that though we did what was required of us as missionary parents in our era of mission work in rural Congo, it was extremely difficult for us—your parents—as well."

Though we did what was required of us as missionary parents in our era of mission work in rural Congo, it was extremely difficult for us—your parents—as well.—Jim Bertsche

As he spoke, there were few dry eyes left in the room, though for most people present it had been decades since they had lived these experiences.

"We want to express our profound gratitude to you for enduring those early periods of separation from your parents and persevering until you adapted to your host family," Bertsche said. "In this way you enabled your parents to pursue their missionary calling and the mission to carry out its purpose in Africa."—*Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission*

Hispanic Women worship despite economy

Conference offers workshops on sustainability, racism and time to 'cry freely.'

Laurie Oswald Robinson

Juanita Diaz, a participant at the Hispanic Women's Conference, worships at the gathering.

The way the Holy Spirit poured upon women during worship at the June 25-28 biennial gathering of Hispanic Mennonite Women in North Newton, Kan., showed that God's riches are not threatened by the recent economic downturn. Even before a sermon could be given during the morning worship at the conference at Bethel College, North Newton, women flooded up to the altar at Bethel College Mennonite Church. They prostrated themselves in prayer as they responded to God's presence at the conference, "Serving a Faithful God."

"Women were lying down on their faces, crying out to God, and God ministered in powerful ways," said Madeline Maldonado, Fort Myers, Fla., outgoing president of Hispanic Mennonite Women. "I am still not sure what all happened, but I do know that a lot of women are going through tough times right now, especially because of the economic situation."

The lean economy kept registration lower than normal, she said. Generally, about 200 women from across the United States attend the gatherings, held regularly since the organization began in 1974.

This year, about 90 women attended, and those were able to fund the trip in part because of Bethel College's generosity; the college gave women with multiple children a flat rate of $40 for lodging.

Other participants proved that Maldonado's description of women tackling tough times is accurate. For example, participant Nena Bennett said the women in her church, Iglesia Menonita de Cordero, in Brownsville, Texas, held many events to fund their trip. They then put the money in a travel pool and divided it among the five women who came. In years past, their group had as many as a dozen women attend the gathering.

"We sacrificed a lot of our time and effort to be able to come to the conference this year," said Bennett, an elder in her congregation and president of the women's group. "But we were willing to do whatever we had to do, because we knew from experience how wonderful the fellowship and worship is at this conference."

The gathering's main speaker was Rebecca Overstreet of Kissimmee, Fla., pastor and head of a Bible school there. María Magdalena De León of Mathis, Texas, led a workshop, "Discovering Your Identity."

She told her story of how she had been known by the name of Maggie for many years. It was a name given her in kindergarten by a well-loved white teacher. This teacher refused to call her Magdalena, her original Spanish name.

After weeks of arguing with her teacher about calling her by her Spanish name, she finally settled into accepting his name for her. But a couple of years ago, she attended a seminar that evoked memories of her childhood. She cried for hours and realized the racism that was inherent in the naming incident. And now she has reclaimed her original name, Magdalena, as a way to reclaim her Latina identity.

Another workshop, "The Modest Woman" by Nancy Morales of Puerto Rico, focused on God's faithfulness and provision for her and her family as well as tips for better managing finances.

Marisa Alemán-Cantú of Rock Island, Ill., gave the workshop "The Innovative Woman: Renew, Reuse, Recycle." She provided ways to creatively reuse items: for example, using egg cartons to organize panty hose and knee-highs in a drawer.

"Besides the tough economic times, I noticed a lot of women have things going on at home they needed to get away from in order to pray and talk with other women," Maldonado said. "Some have issues with children, issues with husbands, some are going through abuse. Some just wanted to be away from their church home and cry freely without anyone watching them or questioning them.

"When Latina women gather at these conferences," she said, "we feel so free to worship the Lord—to jump around and dance, to release all that is in our hearts to God. It's this worship and this fellowship that makes all the sacrifice worth it."—*Laurie Oswald Robinson for Mennonite Church USA*

First-generation immigrants build bridges

Symposium participants balance cultural and Mennonite Church USA identity.

During a symposium April 24-25 at Pasadena (Calif.) Mennonite Church, table groups drew images symbolizing participants' current and desired relationship with the denomination.

"At my table, we drew two half circles to symbolize the two different worlds of the first-generation immigrants and the people who have been in the denomination for a long time," said Madeline Maldonado, a symposium facilitator and co-pastor of Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Arca de Salvación in Fort Myers, Fla. "And then we drew a bridge between these two half circles to show how we desire to have a mutual exchange between these two groups. It symbolized how the flow of ideas needs to go in both directions."

"For example," she said, "first-generation immigrant congregations have many gifts, such as evangelizing and church-planting and establishing Bible institutes—not only here in the States but also in our homelands. But there is often no avenue for us to share these gifts or receive the strengths from longtime congregations."

Even more powerful than the images was the symposium's intent to make these desires reality by sponsoring this first-time gathering for first-generation immigrants. About 55 participants came from Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference, Southeast Conference and Western District Conference—all of which include first-generation immigrant congregations.

"We wanted to provide a safe place to share their stories and to talk about what they are doing locally and globally with their many church-planting efforts," said Iris de León-Hartshorn, director of Intercultural Relations for Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership and a planner/facilitator of the event. "At the same time, we wanted to provide a place where agency staff could hear their stories face-to-face and to brainstorm ways to resource the entire church."

The planners also wanted to provide a forum for immigrants to help each other, she said. All the workshops were led by first-generation immigrants, whose gifts are often overlooked as resources for larger churchwide gatherings.

The personal storytelling component captured the hearts of many of the participants, including Virgo Hondojo, pastor of Indonesian Christian Fellowship in Pasadena area and a planner.

"One of the most positive aspects of the symposium for me and many others was the freedom to share our stories and our feelings about our experience here in the States," he said. "In many ways, we as first-generation immigrants struggle to build community with Mennonite Church USA, because we often feel like aliens and outsiders. ... We want to be uniquely Indonesian but also be closely related to Mennonite Church USA," he said.

The personal stories are the building blocks that now must be shaped into a more congregational identity within Mennonite Church USA, said Gilberto Flores, associate conference minister for Western District Conference.

"Without enough engagement with the whole church, local congregations from other cultures tend to be isolated from what is going on in the general picture and become individualistic," he said. "Our challenge now is to provide more conduits for having a mutual exchange of understandings and meanings—such as some of the excellent resources increasingly being offered to people of color at our colleges and seminaries. This will take more than a generation to happen on a wide scale, and Anglos have to learn how to be patient with the way other cultures see the same things."
—Laurie Oswald Robinson for Mennonite Church USA

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The Corinthian Plan draws 400 so far

New health-care plan for pastors needs 720 churches by Oct. 1 to start Jan. 1.

As of Aug. 1, 400 Mennonite Church USA congregations either have enrolled in The Corinthian Plan or indicated they are planning to enroll. According to Keith Harder, Executive Leadership staff member leading the enrollment process, 720 congregations are needed by Oct. 1 in order to meet the requirements for the plan to go forward on Jan. 1, 2010.

"We have not heard from approximately 400 congregations," Harder said on Aug. 3, "and we really need to hear from them. Our ambassadors have told us that [the remaining] 125 congregations are unlikely to participate."

The Corinthian Plan, a mutual aid program designed to provide health-care access for Mennonite Church USA ministers, is the Executive Board's response to a 2007 mandate passed by the Delegate Assembly asking for such a denominational plan for ministers.

For more information about The Corinthian Plan, visit www.thecorinthianplan.org or call 620-382-7135.—*Everett J. Thomas*

EL follows up on health-care resolution

Church leaders send letter to government, members encouraged to do the same.

In response to calls in the U.S. Congress for health-care reform, Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership staff took several steps in late July to follow up on the "National Healthcare Policy: Next Step" resolution passed by the Delegate Assembly on July 4.

Peace advocate Susan Mark Landis sent a bulletin insert to Mennonite Church USA congregations asking members to contact their congressional representatives. Landis said the churchwide resolution supports legislation that will extend access to health care to all Americans, particularly the poor and disadvantaged.

Two congregational prayers that can be used by congregations who want to focus on the health-care resolution accompanied the bulletin insert.

Outgoing executive director Jim Schrag and his staff faxed letters to 20 senators and 100 representatives in states or districts with heavy concentrations of Mennonite Church USA members.

The letter included the health-care resolution and cited the history of Mennonites involved in health-care reform. It said that the basis for concern for health-care access is rooted in Scripture, the Mennonite Church USA *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and the denominational vision for healing and hope.

Timothy Stoltzfus Jost, Robert L. Willett Family Professor of Law and Ethan Allen Faculty Fellow at the Washington and Lee University and a member of Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va., was the primary architect of the Delegate Assembly resolution.

The resolution builds on health-care policy principles adopted by Mennonite Church USA delegates in 2005 and 2007.

Additional resources will be available by July 31 on the Mennonite Church USA Web site for congregational study and advocacy work on health-care access issues.

For more information, go to www.MennoniteUSA.org/nationalhealthcare.
—*Mennonite Church USA*

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EUROPEAN HERITAGE II with JOHN SHARP (June 29 - July 12)
ITALY, AUSTRIA and GERMANY (July 7-17)
ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (July 23 - August 4)
SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29 - August 11)
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THE ROAD to JERUSALEM (September 11-22)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE IV (September 16-29)

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Mennonite Economic Development Associates will host ***Business as a Calling 2009—New Frontiers: New Solutions*** Nov. 5-8 in San José, Calif. For details, visit www.meda.org or call 717-560-6546.

WORKERS

Bontrager-Singer, Kay, was ordained at Faith Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on June 14.

Hostetter, Rene, was licensed toward ordination as associate pastor at First Mennonite Church, Indianapolis, Ind., on June 21.

Killough, Paula, was licensed toward ordination at Prairie Street Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind., on May 10, for her work as senior executive for advancement with Mennonite Mission Network.

Kreider, Andrew, ended as pastor at Prairie Street Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind., on June 30.

Lehman Gerber, Suella, was licensed toward ordination as pastor at Fellowship of Hope, Elkhart, Ind., on June 14.

Smith-Morrison, Barbara, ended a term as pastor of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, Ontario, on June 30.

Stauffer Kurtz, Sonya, was licensed for ministry at Rochester Area Mennonite Fellowship, Rochester, N.Y., on May 31.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Alexander, Troy Michael, June 30, to Nathan and Erin Froese Alexander, McPherson, Kan.

Awad Lobe, Aisha AnnaMarie, July 4, to Greg and Tamara Awad Lobe, Waterloo, Ontario.

Buchholz, Cameron James, April 16, to Geoff and Jennifer Hostetler Buchholz, Goshen, Ind.

Farmer, Madelyn Nicole, June 14, to Corey and Renae Roth Farmer, Iowa City, Iowa.

Janzen, Noah Robert, July 7, to Ben and Stephanie Janzen, Waterloo, Ontario.

Kauffman, Sienna Danae, July 2, to Tyler and Cara Wagler Kauffman, Harrisonburg, Va.

Mast, Maggie Louise, May 5, to Chris and Heidi Miller Mast, Shipshewana, Ind.

Miller, Kaitlyn Mae, July 6, to Adam and Tina Piriak Miller, Warren, Ohio.

Miller, Soren Langston, March 28, to Penn and Caryn Yoder Miller, Lititz, Pa.

Morgan, Joshua Hagey, June 30, to Jared and Liz Hagey Morgan, Pinto, Md.

Moyer, Wyatt Glen, June 11, to Travis and Rebecca Herman Moyer, Sellersville, Pa.

Nice, Orion Steffen, May 29, to Kevin and Wendy Yoder Nice, Goshen, Ind.

Nickels, William John, May 21, to Chris and Sarah Hershey Nickels, Schwenksville, Pa.

Plank, Simone Eloise, July 2, to Ezra and Emily Schackmann Plank, Iowa City, Iowa.

Schmidt, Elijah Allen, July 7, to James and Laura Waidelich Schmidt, Archbold, Ohio.

Schrock, Elliot Ervin, June 17, to Jeremy and Amanda Wollman Schrock, Freeman, S.D.

Siebert, Eli Henry, June 24, to Shane and Tina Menebroker Siebert, Lincoln, Neb.

Skogerboe, Esther Wulf, June 13, to Noah and Cori Wulf Skogerboe, Minneapolis, Minn.

Springer, Andrew Lee, July 3, to Troy and Catie Froese Springer, Elkhart, Ind.

Swartzentruber, Maxon Joseph, June 7, to Andy and Jane Miller Swartzentruber, Kalona, Iowa.

Worthington, Madison Grace, June 23, to Christopher and Jennifer Kulp Worthington, Sellersville, Pa.

Yoder, Ella Brooke, June 30, to Zach and Abby Leake Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va.

Yoder, Keaton Wenger, June 25, to Brent and Heidi Wenger Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va.

Yoder, Neliyah Faith, June 26, to D.J. and Karlette Troyer Yoder, Milford, Neb.

MARRIAGES

Aeschliman/Caffee: Kalla Aeschliman, Wauseon, Ohio, and Justin Caffee, Berne, Ind., June 20, at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

Atkinson/McFarland: Dale Atkinson, Smithville, Ohio, and Brandi McFarland, Akron, Ohio, May 16, at Smithville Mennonite Church.

Bauman/Jagger: David Bauman, St. Jacobs, Ontario, and Crystal Jagger, Ontario, June 20, at Grey Silos, Waterloo, Ontario.

Boese/Lamb: Jared Boese, Hesston, Kan., and Katelyn Lamb, Hesston, July 25, at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Bontrager/Burkholder: Shannon Bontrager, Goshen, Ind., and Jordan Burkholder, Goshen, July 18, at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Boshart/Tyson: Amy Boshart, Wayland, Iowa, and John Tyson, Lansdale, Pa., June 27, at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland.

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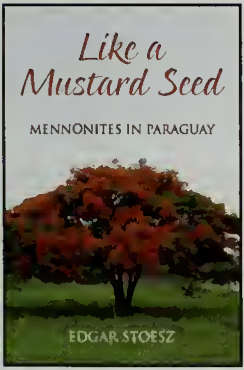

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Cosgrove/Schooley: Tara Cosgrove, Centerville, Iowa, and Ben Schooley, Chariton, Iowa, June 13, at Faith United Methodist Church, Centerville.

Detweiler/Versluis: Neil Detweiler, Goshen, Ind., and Rachel Versluis, Ann Arbor, Mich., June 27, at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Ebersole/Weaver: Drew Ebersole, Sarasota, Fla., and Kara Weaver, Hesston, Kan., July 11, at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Eberspacher/Jantzen: Eric Eberspacher, Milford, Neb., and Lauren Jantzen, Overland Park, Kan., June 12, at Overland Park Church of the Nazarene.

Eshleman/Stutzman: Anthony Eshleman, Stuarts Draft, Va., and Shannon Stutzman, Stuarts Draft, June 27, at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.

Friesen/Kellar: David Friesen, Freeman, S.D., and Brandy Kellar, Freeman, July 4, at Prairie Arboretum, Freeman.

Froese/Plett: Angie Froese, Buhler, Kan., and Dustin Plett, Sterling, Kan., July 11, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, Kan.

Gingrich/Hardman: Lindsey Gingrich, St. Jacobs, Ontario, and Shayne Hardman, Ontario, June 20, at Doon Heritage Crossroads, Kitchener, Ontario.

Glick/Tann: Kara Glick, Pekin, Ill., and Donovan Tann, Jenkintown, Pa., July 11, at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Graber/Keener: Judy Yoder Graber, Elkhart, Ind., and Les Keener, Elkhart, June 27, at Belmont Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Hickey/Zook: Patricia Hickey, Milton, Iowa, and Mark Zook, Philadelphia, Mo., June 6, at Pulaski Mennonite Church, Pulaski, Iowa.

Horst/Keener: Melissa Horst, Gordonville, Pa., and Timothy Keener, Mt. Joy, Pa., May 23, at Stumptown Mennonite Church, Bird-in-Hand, Pa.

James/Schmidt: Tony James, Hugoton, Kan., and Kayla Renea Schmidt, Turpin, Okla., July 18, at Turpin Mennonite Church.

Karagiorge/Noble: Kylie Karagiorge, Columbus, Ohio, and Kevin Noble, Dalton, Ohio, June 20, at the home of the bride's parents, Perrysburg, Ohio.

Kelley/Tutko: Richard Kelley, Gibson City, Ill., and Linda Tutko, Bloomington, Ill., July 26, at East Bend Mennonite Church, Fisher, Ill.

Landis/Yoder: Kristina Landis, Harleysville, Pa., and Gregory Yoder, Perkasie, Pa., July 25, at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Maund/Reiff: Corrine Maund, Lansdale, Pa., and Lowell Mark Reiff, Lansdale, June 13, at Zion Mennonite Church, Souderton, Pa.

Meissner/Price: Becky Meissner, Fairport, N.Y., and Dan Price, Fairport, July 18, at Rochester Area Mennonite Fellowship, Rochester, N.Y.

Miller/Roth: Peter Miller, Evanston, Ill., and Leah Roth, Goshen, Ind., July 5, at Reith Recital Hall, Goshen College.

Nafziger/Wyse: Caleb Nafziger, Bryan, Ohio, and Abby Wyse, Archbold, Ohio, May 23, at Evansport United Methodist Church, Ohio.

Parrish/Sauder: Ruth Parrish, East Petersburg, Pa., and Eric Sauder, Manheim, Pa., June 21, at East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

Penner/Smith: Anne Penner, Indianapolis, Ind., and Jesse Smith, Iowa City, Iowa, June 20, at Shalom Mennonite Church, Indianapolis.

Roth/Stoltzfus: Jessica Roth, Cairo, Neb., and Marcos Stoltzfus, Bellefontaine, Ohio, June 20, at Wood River Mennonite Church, Wood River, Neb.

Roth/Stover: Mikayla Roth, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, and Heath Stover, Colby, Kan., May 23, at The Red Barn Farm, Colby.

Sauder/Short: Alysa Sauder, Archbold, Ohio, and Mark Short, Wauseon, Ohio, June 26, at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Schmidt/Titus: Ian Schmidt, Walton, Kan., and Jasmine Titus, Lawrence, Kan., June 26, at Lake Wabaunsee, Eskridge, Kan.

Shenk/Showalter: Justin Shenk, Akron, Pa., and Valerie Showalter, Linville, Va., May 24, at Shelby Farm, Linville.

Slye/Yoder: Timothy Slye, Springfield, Ohio, and Stephanie Yoder, Pettisville, Ohio, July 25, at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Trotter/Wine: Jon Trotter, Harrisonburg, Va., and Meredith Wine, Harrisonburg, July 20, at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va.

DEATHS

Aeschliman, Florence A. Short, 86, Archbold, Ohio, died July 10. Spouse: Elton J. Aeschliman (deceased). Parents: Andrew and Mary Miller Short. Children: Carma Yoder, Merna Bower, Reed, Lila Zellers, Vonda Rickard; eight grandchildren. Funeral: July 14 at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Becker, Leland, 71, Aberdeen, Idaho, died July 26. Parents: Waldo and Beatrice Johnson Becker. Funeral: July 29 at First Mennonite Church, Aberdeen.

Benner, Charles B., 86, Souderton, Pa., died July 22 of cerebrovascular disease. Spouse: Marie M. Moyer Benner. Parents: Webster M. and Hannah Brunner Benner. Children: Dennis M., C. David, Timothy, Neil, Christine Seasholtz; 14 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 27 at Souderton Mennonite Homes Chapel.

Bontrager, Merlin "Merle" Lee, Sr., 77, Sarasota, Fla., died July 8. Spouse: Mary Kurtz Bontrager. Parents: Levi and Elva Miller Bontrager. Children: Glenda Yoder, Charlene Pillot, LuAnn Mayer, Merlin Jr.; seven grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 13 at Bay Shore Mennonite Church, Sarasota.

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Brandenberger, Lloyd, 82, Middlebury, Ind., died July 22 of age related complications with pneumonia and Parkinson's disease. Spouse: Mary Jean Schrock Brandenberger (deceased). Parents: Noah and Matilda Yoder Brandenberger. Children: Debbi Shrock, Jeanne Brandenberger, Joan Peterson, Steven; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: July 26 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Croyle, Denton E., 85, Wadsworth, Ohio, died June 20 of cancer. Spouse: Mary L. Schnell Croyle. Parents: Lloyd S. and Emma N. Stahl Croyle. Children: Philip J., Ann Weldy, J. Marshall, Warren L., Timothy; 11 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: July 5 at First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth.

Derstine, Pauline G. Moyer, 91, Souderton, Pa., died July 27. Spouse: Marvin G. Derstine (deceased). Parents: Joseph and Mabel Groover Moyer. Children: Patricia Ann Halteman, Paul M., Roy M., Dale M., Betty L. Kulp, Nancy R. Moyer; 17 grandchildren; four step-grandchildren; 48 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 1 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Grieser, Edna, 100, Urbana, Ill., died July 21. Parents: George and Lena Baecher Grieser. Funeral: July 24 at East Bend Mennonite Church, Fisher, Ill.

Habermehl, Edna, 100, Elmira, Ontario, died July 18. Parents: Albert and Annie Shantz Habermehl. Funeral: July 25 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, Ont.

Hartman, Floyd Dwight, 94, Harrisonburg, Va., died April 27. Spouse: Marie Reviere Hartman (deceased). Parents: Walter E. and Della Layman Hartman. Grandchildren: two step-grandchildren; four step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 29 at Park View Mennonite Church.

Hochstetler, Edna M. Miller, 77, Nappanee, Ind., died July 16. Spouse: Henry Hochstetler. Parents: Nathaniel and Betty Thomas Miller. Children: Henry, Anna Weaver, Diana Yoder, Debra Neidig; seven grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 20 at North Main Street Mennonite Church, Nappanee.

Hooley, Nettie J. Classen, 89, North Lawrence, Ohio, died May 23 of a stroke. Parents: Clarence David Hooley (deceased). John L. and Marie A. Reimer Classen. Children: David J., Donald E., Daniel R.; six grandchildren. Funeral: May 23 at Pleasant View Mennonite Church, North Lawrence.

Hostetler, Doris Ilene, 85, Hesston, Kan., died July 10. Parents: Frank and Lizzie Zimmerman Hostetler. Funeral: July 14 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

King, Agnes Wingard, 90, Lancaster, Pa., died May 21. Spouse: Mahlon King (deceased). Parents: Alonzo and Ella Johns Wingard. Children: Arnold, Aldus, Stanley; eight grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Memorial service: May 25 at Ridgeview Mennonite Church, Gordonville, Pa.

Kuhns, James Winfred, 84, Harrisonburg, Va., died March 31. Spouse: Olive Clemens Kuhns. Parents: Allen Winifred and Anna Shupe Kuhns. Children: Jean Rissler, Genet Orebaugh, Philip, Evelyn Rankin; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 18 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Martin, Harold, 96, DeMotte, Ind., died June 29. Spouse: Florence Reinhardt Martin (deceased). Parents: Arthur and Lydia Egli Martin. Children: Carolyn Birky, Peggy Hamstra, Virginia Bierma, Allen; 16 grandchildren; 33 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 1 at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Kouts, Ind.

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Meyer, Norman Dean, 87, Wayland, Iowa, died June 28. Spouse: Doris Jean Eigsti Meyer. Parents: Benjamin C. and Maude Mae Wyse Meyer. Children: R.D., Robert, Kathy Schooley; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 1 at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland.

Miller, Maxine Schrock, 79, Goshen, Ind., died July 4 of complications from a stroke. Spouse: John K. Miller (deceased). Parents: Tobias T. and Sarah Lambright Schrock. Children: Michael, Suzanne Yoder; five grandchildren. Funeral: July 9 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Newswanger, Betty Louise Hershey, 66, Lancaster, Pa., died July 4 of cancer. Spouse: Wesley Newswanger. Parents: Landis and Ruth Hershey. Funeral: July 10 at Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaster.

Nussbaum, Aaron Isaac, 89, Orrville, Ohio, died May 13. Spouse: Mary Ebersole Nussbaum. Parents: Daniel and Edna Mary Amstutz Nussbaum. Children: David, Paul, Samuel, Earl, Nathan, John, Esther Walthour, Ruth Suter, Lois Bixler, Rose Mary Hackman; 24 grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; five step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 18 at Crown Hill Mennonite Church, Rittman, Ohio.

Rhodes, Anthony Lawrence, 35, Dalton, Ga., died of complications of Type I diabetes. Spouse: Mary Teresa Sanner Rhodes. Parents: Robert Allen and Rose Weaver Rhodes. Funeral: July 15 at Henry Memorial Presbyterian Church, Dublin, Ga.

Richer, Ora W., 83, Archbold, Ohio, died June 26. Spouse: Marjorie Richer (deceased). Parents: David and Ida Sauder Richer. Children: Mike, Brooks, Marcia Lehman, Ken; 13 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Memorial service: July 4 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Riegsecker, Lueen Mae Grieser, 78, Archbold, Ohio, died June 27 of a stroke. Spouse: Edward Dale Riegsecker (deceased). Parents: Charles and Sophie Rupp Grieser. Children: Sandra Aeschliman, Rita Rupp, Beverly Bonilla, Alan; 13 grandchildren. Funeral: July 1 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Ross, Rebecca Sue Moyer, 53, Doylestown, Pa. died April 23. Parents: Willard Paul and Elizabeth Chittick Moyer. Children: Karin N. Ross, Michael D.; one grandchild.

Schlabaugh, Clara Belle Bontrager, 78, Washington, Iowa, died July 3 of cancer. Spouse: Omar "Pete" Schlabaugh. Parents: Christopher and Viola Hershberger Bontrager. Children: Diane Martin, Sandra Schlabaugh, Jeanna Stauffer, Dawn Schrock, Michael; 11 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 7 at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.

Schrock, Margaret Suzanne, 56, Orrville, Ohio, died July 1. Parents: N. Wilmer and Pauline Liechty Schrock. Funeral: July 4 at Crown Hill Mennonite Church, Rittman, Ohio.

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

Shenk, Mary Florence, 92, Harrisonburg, Va., died July 17. Parents: Levi J. and Amanda Yoder Shenk. Funeral: July 25 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Smith, Cleo Hershey, 59, Waynesboro, Va., died June 28 of complications of colon cancer. Spouse: Eileen Basinger Smith. Parents: William L. and Florence Heatwole Smith. Children: Tracy, Tonya Swarey; six grandchildren. Funeral: July 2 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro.

Snyder, Mary E. Rowe, 85, New Britain Township, Pa., died June 8. Spouse: Carl R. Snyder (deceased). Parents: John and Jane Herbert Rowe. Children: Robert, Jane A. Volpe, Gary, Phillip, Brian; 14 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 11 at Doylestown Mennonite Church, Doylestown, Pa.

Souder, Ruth F., 91, Sellersville, Pa., died July 11. Parents: Harvey A. and Bessie Freed Souder. Funeral: July 16 at Souderton Mennonite Homes, Souderton, Pa.

Stalter, Margery Eileen Rocke, 82, Flanagan, Ill., died July 8 of multiple health issues including a heart attack, stroke and congestive heart failure. Spouse: Raymond "Fritz" Stalter. Parents: John and Sara Egle Rocke. Children: Larry, Sandra Schertz, Randy, Rebecca Martellaro; eight grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 11 at Prairieview Mennonite Church, Flanagan.

Swartzentruber, Norman Henry, 68, Goshen, Ind., died July 10. Spouse: Vera L. Bontrager Swartzentruber. Parents: Menno and Esther Stutzman Swartzentruber. Children: Bret, Shawn, Timothy, Lisa Maust, Melanie Hice; six grandchildren. Funeral: July 15 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Widmer, Gladys Marie Roth, 96, Wayland, Iowa, died June 29. Spouse: Henry Widmer (deceased). Parents: Peter J. and Lydia Katherine Orendorff Widmer. Children: Melba Widmer, Richard; three grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 1 at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland.

Yoder, E. Bernice Widmer Kauffman, 95, Woodburn, Ore., died July 11. Spouse: Tobe Yoder (deceased). Spouse: Charles Kauffman (deceased). Children: Sharon Clay, Ardis Nofziger, Dennis Kauffman, Darrel Kauffman; step-children: Robert Yoder, John Yoder, Ernie Yoder; foster daughter: Marie Zehr; numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. Memorial service: July 17 at Salem Mennonite Church, Salem, Ore.

Yoder, Floyd Franklin, 89, Kalona, Iowa, died July 4. Spouse: Marjorie Yoder. Parents: Chris A. and Barbara Troyer Yoder. Children: Leland, Galen, Curtis, Calvin, Rhonda Yoder; 12 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 6 at Wellman Mennonite Church, Wellman, Iowa.

Yoder, Rhoda Annabelle, 86, Minot, N.D., died May 19. Parents: Jesse and Edna King Yoder. Funeral: May 23 at the Bible Fellowship Church of the Brethren at Minot.

Zehr, Ray, 87, Hesston, Kan., died July 9. Spouse: Lois Nussbaum Zehr. Parents: Peter and Katie Jantzi Zehr. Children: Dr. Terry Zehr, Nancy Shear; five grandchildren. Funeral: July 13 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

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Hesston College seeks a ***director of the pastoral ministries program***. The ideal candidate will excel in spiritual formation, administration, teaching and recruitment. The candidate will have an understanding of and commitment to the Mennonite Confession of Faith, the larger Mennonite church, and Anabaptist theology and practice. Pastoral ministry experience and master's degree required; seminary or doctorate in theological studies preferred. Application materials: Send an employment application, curriculum vitae, Ministerial Leadership Information form, official transcript(s), list of references and application essays to: Sandra Zerger, Vice President for Academics, Box 3000, Hesston, KS 67062, or send to sandraz@hesston.edu. Start date: spring term 2010. Review of applications begins Sept. 1 and continues until the position is filled. Additional information available at www.hesston.edu/employment. EOE

EMU seeks qualified applicants for a ***full-time director of seminary admissions***. The position is responsible for seminary admission and recruitment activities. Master's degree preferred. Must have good communication skills, be a creative thinker and facilitate student service functions. The position calls for office time as well as regular times of travel. Must be a committed Christian in accordance with the EMU Statement of Commitment as well as the EMU philosophy and purpose. Prior experience in administration, public relations, admissions and recruitment, and/or ministry-related experience is required. Position begins no later than July 2010. Submit application, resumé and three references to: hr@emu.edu. For more information visit our Web site at www.emu.edu/humanresources. People who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Durham Mennonite Church, Durham, N.C., celebrates its ***40th anniversary*** on Saturday, Oct. 24, 1:30-5:30 p.m., and Sunday, Oct. 25, at the 10:30 a.m. worship service. For more information contact pastor@durhammennonite.org or Marcia Nice at 919-596-9459. For updates see www.durhammennonite.org.

Shalom Christian Academy is currently seeking applicants for ***administrator***, an executive position at a 500-pupil PreK-Grade 12 day school in South Central Pennsylvania. A Doctorate of Education is preferred. A master's degree with administrative experience is required. A history of lifelong learning and Christian service is valued. This visionary person will lead an administrative team as they continue to move our school in fulfilling our stated mission to "prepare and release each student for a life of consequence for the kingdom of God." Shalom is a parent-owned and board-governed multidenominational Anabaptist school. Qualified individuals may submit confidential resumés to the search committee secretary at www.shalomca.info.

Eastern Mennonite Missions seeks ***80-percent-time discipleship ministries outreach director*** to oversee all short-term outreaches. Required: relational, administrative and leadership skills and experience; bachelor's degree; multiple short-term missions experiences; international travel. Apply by Sept. 11; begins Oct. 5, 2009. Contact Jeanette Hunt, jeanetteh@emm.org or 717-898-2251.

Mennonite Men seeks coordinator. The Mennonite Men's organization invites interested candidates to consider a ***half-time salaried position as coordinator*** beginning March 1, 2010. The coordinator provides leadership and direction in carrying out the mission and vision of Mennonite Men, including the JoinHands program. The coordinator position can be located in one of these Mennonite Church USA offices: Newton, Kan.; Elkhart, Ind.; or Harrisonburg, Va. A job description is available and can be found on the Mennonite Men's Web site at www.mennonitemen.org. Interested candidates must submit resumés and letters of interest by Oct. 1, 2010. Contact Jim Gingerich at jimg@mennonite-men.org or call 316-283-5155 ext. 294 for the job description and directions for applying.

Coming to Montreal for school or vacation? Enjoy Montreal's trendy "Plateau" district by staying at ***Maison de l'amitié Summer Guestrooms and Student residence***. Student housing available for September. 514-843-4356, www.residencema.ca; reservations@maisondelamitie.ca.

Mennonite Mission Network seeks a ***host and hostess*** for a three-year term at London Mennonite Center, to begin in 2010. Hospitality is primary function; duties are varied. Contact Ruth L. Guengerich at Mennonite Mission Network, 866-866-2872, ext. 3062, or at ruthg@mennonitemission.net for additional information.

JustHelp, Inc., seeks ***Spanish-proficient public interest attorney*** for new nonprofit. Experience in bankruptcy, landlord tenant or immigration ideal. Inquire at info.justhelp@gmail.com.

JustHelp, Inc., seeks ***executive director*** for new nonprofit. Spanish a plus. All interested candidates encouraged to inquire at info.justhelp@gmail.com.

Calgary First Mennonite Church, located in central Calgary, invites applications for a ***full-time lead pastor*** position available for fall 2009. Our warm, intergenerational congregation of approximately 180 people seeks an applicant with a commitment to Mennonite theology and to the practices of the Mennonite church. We seek a spiritual leader with gifts of preaching, teaching and pastoral care to nurture a meaningful worship life for our congregation. Related education and experience in pastoral leadership is a priority. Please direct inquiries and resumés to our Pastor Search Committee Contact: Marguerite Jack: mjack@netkaster.ca.

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Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference seeking full-time ***interim conference minister*** to provide leadership and support to pastors of member congregations, the development of the eldering ministry and build relationships with PSMC congregations. For a detailed job description, please see our Web site: www.pacificsouthwest.org. Interested candidates send MLI or vita to: Duane Oswald, 1111 E. Herndon Ave, Suite 308, Fresno, CA 93720 or email doswald@avantehealth.com

"Footsteps of Paul" Oct. 9-23, 2009, is an exciting guided tour to Greece and Turkey and includes four Ancient Wonders of the World. A few available seats. Call today, **Alfa Tours**: 717-656-7483.

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The blessing of a shuttle driver

Regina Shands Stoltzfus is working on a doctorate in theology and ethics at Chicago Theological Seminary.

I just wanted to be home. Instead I was stranded in the Phoenix airport. As the "flight delayed" announcements kept coming, I knew I would not make my connection in Chicago. Because that was last the flight out, it meant I would be spending the night in Chicago. From the airport I made a hotel reservation and planned to take a bus to South Bend the next day. If all went according to the new plan, I would be able to pick up my luggage and finally return home after a now five-day-long trip.

Chicago was rainy, windy and cold, and the airport was packed with exhausted holiday travelers, plans thwarted by the weather. I called the hotel and asked about a shuttle; they ran every half hour. Wait at door number one, I was told. I traipsed over to the shuttle area and fell in with some off-duty pilots and flight attendants. Now well after 11 p.m., all the shops in the airport were closed and the hot dog I had in Phoenix was long ago and far away. A shuttle pulled up, not the right one. I waited. Another shuttle appeared. "O'Hare?" I asked.

The driver smiled and said, "Sure."

Gratefully I climbed aboard, followed by a flight attendant, and the shuttle pulled away. The driver was jovial, and even though it was late, his good humor was infectious. He chatted with the flight attendant, whom he knew from other trips. He also noted how tired I seemed and cheerfully assured me we'd be at the hotel soon.

And so we were. Since my missed connection had started this whole adventure, I had no luggage. The driver accompanied us inside, and the flight attendant checked in first. When it was my turn I discovered my name was not on the reservation list. It turns out there were two hotels from the same chain in the area. The shuttle driver immediately said, "I'll take you there. No problem." Wearily but happily, I accepted his offer, and we went back to the van.

I became acutely aware of how hungry I was. Once seated in the van with our seat belts on, I said tentatively, "Is there …"

"Any food?" he finished. He said there's a 7-11 across the way. We drove over and I got a sandwich, some fruit and some cash from the ATM so that I could give this kind man a tip.

At the hotel—the correct one this time—I checked in. Thanking the driver, I said, "Please, let me give you some money for your trouble and your help."

He smiled, and said, "Why would I take your money? You are my sister. I loved you from the first I saw you." And with that he drove away, still smiling. You are my sister.

I am captivated by the accounts of Jesus' healing miracles, but the one I love best is the story of the bleeding woman. She comes to Jesus, her last hope. No one has been able to help her; she has no money and is an outcast. And this Jesus, I imagine her thinking, What will he do if she approaches him? Why should her problems matter? We know the result of her reaching out: She is healed.

He smiled, and said, 'Why would I take your money? You are my sister. I loved you from the first I saw you.'

What draws me in is Jesus calling her daughter. "Daughter, your faith has made you well." Not only does Jesus heal the woman, he also names her connection to family, to community, to the divine. By this naming, Jesus commits an act of radical healing and hospitality that transcends the boundaries of our physical bodies.

In my mind, that shuttle driver, who remains nameless to me, acted in the ways of Jesus.

He went out of his way to take care of more than what he was contracted to do—take passengers from point A to point B, probably quickly and efficiently and with little fuss. Perhaps his curious statement at the end of our time together—I loved you from the first I saw you—is his philosophy of life. Because you are my sister, my brother, I love you. Because I love you, I will take care of you the best way I can, just doing what I do.

That sounds like Jesus to me. TM

Extra copies of this special issue on the Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15 are available at 800-790-2498 or by email at subscriptions@themennonite.org

Continued from page 5

I was especially interested in the different approaches to discussing areas where we differ from each other. Fruitful dialogue happens when two parties actually listen to each other, showing mutual respect for another's feelings as well as beliefs. I want to give special thanks to several pastor-leaders who stopped by the booth and engaged in meaningful discussion, even though they did not agree with MennoNeighbors on the issue of lgbtq inclusion in the church. They made a lasting impression on me, exemplifying what Mennonite Church USA is asking of its members. How different those conversations felt from several encounters with youth pastor-leaders who came up to me with Bibles in hand, using Scripture to tell me how wrong I am. From their body language as they approached, I could tell it would be an encounter rather than a dialogue.

As the church deals with differing voices, my prayer is that we will learn to listen to each other and try to stand in the shoes of those among us who want to be a vital part of the church but are excluded because of who they are.—*Ruby Lehman Harrisonburg, Va.*

Disagrees with *The Mennonite*'s moratorium

I have been in contact with Mennonite churches and members; I and they see *The Mennonite*'s moratorium* as an attempt to stop the constituency from having anything printed that is against the homosexual lifestyle. Many people stopped taking *The Mennonite* as a result. That makes me sad because the church needs an official paper to keep members informed of the happenings of the larger body and to reinforce our beliefs.

We have had no clear voices in support of our official statements. We are losing too many members and churches for the good of the brotherhood. It seems people think we have our statement of faith and everybody knows it so why print anything more?—*Sanford Oyer, Wooster, Ohio*

Vacationaries article is misleading

In response to Bob Lupton's essay "Vacationaries" (June 16), I agree that it is indeed unhealthy for all concerned when short-term mission is done in an inappropriate way. However, I am disappointed with Lupton's narrow focus and that he lumped all short-term mission into this scornful category. It is easy to set up a straw man for short-term missions—that they primarily are about needing to "make work" for servants, give to the needy in a one-sided relationship or recruit for long-term missions. But that view misses the point of what short-term service can be and should be: an opportunity to create new, Christ-centered relationships that offer perspective on life, faith and the world.

Short-term service should focus on mutuality, respect, giving and receiving, empowerment, building relationships and being challenged to see how God is at work in the world in so many ways. Short-term service should be about creating face-to-face relationships with opportunities to break down stereotypes and expand worldviews. Mennonite Mission Network develops ongoing relationships with established, local Christian communities before service participants arrive to ensure they are working hand-in-hand in ways the communities determine.

In his article, Lupton did not offer examples of mission trips that emphasized face-to-face relationships with opportunities to break down stereotypes and expand worldviews. He decried results-oriented mission but lauded a single model of mission and the results it brought. While that particular model offers positives, the article as a whole misses what we consider the most important results—how the kingdom grows as groups of individuals connect and how guests and hosts are challenged and blessed by one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.—*Del Hershberger, Hesston, Kan.*

Make room for young women to lead

As outgoing president and incoming president of Mennonite Women USA, we want to thank Anna Groff for speaking out for women in the Mennonite church ("Open Up to Millennial Women," June 16). We support Anna's challenge to the church to continue to be sensitive to ways in which current leaders can invite young women to become involved, develop their leadership skills and be active in the Mennonite church.

Mennonite Women USA supports participation of women in leadership at all levels and stands in solidarity with women of all ages who are called to leadership. Mennonite Church USA is challenged to do the same. We challenge all current MC USA leaders—from the local congregation to the national boards—to recognize the need for learning new styles of leadership that our younger members bring with them and the value of continuing to learn rather than staying stuck in one's current, comfortable style of leadership that is no longer the most useful for our work groups. We Baby Boomers and those older have much to learn from our younger members; we need to make room for them to develop and use their leadership skills. —*Rebecca Sommers, president, Mennonite Women, USA; Ruth Lapp Guengerich, president-elect, Mennonite Women USA*

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* Since 2000, *The Mennonite* has had a moratorium on letters and articles that address the church's teaching position on sexuality. However, we do publish news articles that report actions taken by a conference against a congregation or a minister when those actions are a result of noncompliance with these teaching positions. We also publish letters that criticize or support the decision to maintain this moratorium.—*Editor*

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Gordon Houser on the job in Asunción, Paraguay

Unromantic unity

[Make] every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.—Ephesians 4:3

At the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly 15 July 14-19 in Asunción, Paraguay, there was much talk of unity. And the worship there by more than 5,000 Mennonites from across the globe inspired feelings of togetherness. But we left with the question facing all Christians: How do we live that realistically?

In his Saturday morning (July 18) Bible study, Chris Marshall, an Anabaptist theologian from New Zealand, delivered a stirring analysis of Ephesians 4:1-6 (see page 16). He pointed out that leading "a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (v. 1) means above all "being committed to reconciliation and peacemaking, especially within the family of the church."

But how, he asked, do we "make every effort" to maintain this unity? He mentioned three things. First, we must know our calling, which is "to participate in God's great work of healing the universe through Jesus Christ."

Second, Marshall said, "we must cultivate those qualities of Christian character that give expression to our calling": humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance. When these are present, "it is possible to overcome every conflict and to heal any hurt that may arise among us."

Unity is not some romantic notion or good feeling but a reality we are called to live out.

The third requirement for sustaining Christian unity and peace, Marshall said, is "to be clear on what the church is." Paul does not tell his readers to create this unity. "The unity of the church is not something we manufacture by being unusually nice to one another," he said. It already exists, brought into being by the Spirit of God.

What the Bible says about the church's unity is similar to what it says about peace. It is not some nice add-on but an essential to our faith because it reflects the character of God. Unity is not some romantic notion or good feeling but a reality we are called to live out.

At the beginning of the assembly, outgoing MWC president Nancy Heisey made similar points from a different text (see page 12), Philippians 2:1-11. Living out our unity in Christ requires having the mind of Christ, she said, and that involves "giving up what could be ours," just as Jesus did.

Heisey was more forthcoming about the hindrances to unity that we face. Mennonites like to look back at our history or listen to others compliment us on our commitment to biblical mission. But we need "to put our history in question," she said, and be aware of our flaws as well.

When we come together, as we did in Paraguay, we are delighted by our diversity. But experiencing people who are different can be hard, Heisey said. "It feels threatening when a sister church has a different way of welcoming members," she said.

In a workshop on Mennonite-Catholic dialogue (see page 12), Fernando Enns said that if you want true dialogue you must speak with someone who believes strongly in the opposing view. In other words, for unity to become real it must come through a true encounter, not a surface niceness.

The MWC assembly included wonderful expressions of our unity in Christ, particularly in our singing (see page 2). In Paraguay I witnessed the diverse beauty of that unity but also heard about comments of racial prejudice.

Such assemblies expose those attending to the differences among us. We do not experience our life in Christ the same way, and we don't have to. But we are called—clearly from the Bible—to work at maintaining the unity God has created.

There is nothing romantic about this work. It requires great sacrifice—mostly to our selfish pride. Jesus' own self-emptying (Philippians 2:7) led to his crucifixion. The church is called to the same kind of selflessness.

Worshiping together is certainly a sign of unity and gives us strength and encouragement to live out that unity in our own locales. But to show the world that unity in Christ means hard work. It means we must make "every effort to maintain the Spirit in the bond of peace."—*gh*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

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Signs of God's healing and hope

Ron Byler is interim executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

In the Delegate Assembly in July, delegates talked frankly about what it means to be followers of Jesus Christ and communities of grace, joy and peace. We often find it difficult in our particular cultural context to know how to give our first allegiance to Christ and how to extend the church's witness in the world.

In the delegate discussion, Dave Hockman-Wert from Corvallis (Ore.) Mennonite Fellowship said less than half the members in his congregation grew up in a Mennonite congregation. The congregation wondered if we are too focused on our own survival? Too ready to go along to get along?

Pastor Ron Adams of East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., said his congregation studied Colossians to see how Paul's instructions to Christians living in the Roman Empire can speak to Christians living in the United States. He said the study produced more questions about faithful living than answers.

"Questions keep us moving, thinking, dreaming and growing," he said. "They keep us humble. Instead of resting on our answers, with God's help, we make it up and are made up as we go."

Ron is saying it isn't our task to solve the world's problems. We don't know how God will solve them, but we do know God wants to. Our job is to stand with all that is broken in the world and be a sign of God's healing and hope in the world.

At Open Door Mennonite Church in Jackson, Miss., being a sign of healing and hope means hosting 70 children each year for Bible school, half of whom are from the neighborhood and don't normally go to church. Jody Miller says it's exciting to see church members work together.

At North Side Mennonite Church in Hagerstown, Md., Teresa and Gary Zook are involved with the local high school band because they say it gives them an opportunity to talk to the youth and their parents. People have hurts and need to know someone cares about them. "God can use us wherever we are," says Teresa.

At Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland, a group from the congregation found that participating in a national rally in Washington to fight against poverty gave them new energy. The experience linked them with other Christians who care about the same things they do. "We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit and that we can make an impact by working together across many classes and communities locally and nationally," says member Al Anthony.

At Living Water Community Church in Chicago, Samrach Nuth became the first Cambodian licensed for ministry in a Mennonite church in this country. A product of the killing fields, he now leads a Cambodian group that meets with Living Water. He will travel to Cambodia this fall to help minister to 700 young churches there.

Nuth learned from Mennonites that forgiving enemies is an important part of following Jesus. He has forgiven the Khmer Rouge for what they did to him and urges others to do the same.

At the Columbus convention, speaker Shane Claiborne from Philadelphia told us to stop complaining about the church we've experienced and start becoming the church Christ imagined.

Mennonite Church USA congregations are learning what it means to be signs of God's healing and hope in the world. We are learning together to be faithful followers of Jesus.

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

TheMennonite

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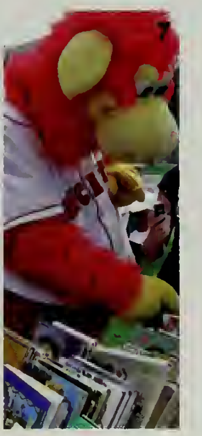

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Cover: Dreamstime.com

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Can't eliminate pain with more pain

As a counselor who for the last 25 years has been working with childless couples, pregnant couples and those who have placed for adoption and/or aborted, I was pleased to receive the June 2 issue about abortion. I was also glad that the editorial repeated the Mennonite Church USA statement, "Protests against abortion have greater integrity when they are combined with concern for all human life."

I am a Christian who believes in the sacredness of life, all life. I enter into the grief and mourning of couples desperately trying to become parents for years without success. When they lose a pregnancy they have lost a baby, not a bunch of tissue. Also I journey with birth mothers who have not been able to resolve pain from abortions occurring years ago, which are still sapping their strength.

I want to respond to Debra Sapp-Yarwood's paragraph justifying abortion in the case of rape. A number of birth mothers, whose pregnancies were the products of rape, placed their babies for adoption with my assistance. Each of them felt that being able to create a family—where there could be no family—somehow made their pain and sorrow worthwhile and helped them work through it. Also, being able to see their child grow up, through pictures and letters, gave them joy and hope (and no guilt). One cannot eliminate pain with more pain.—*Ruth Mark, Goshen, Ind.*

Women at AMBS

Anna Groff's editorial ("Opening up to Millennial Women," June 16) states that there are fewer women in leadership at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary today than a decade ago. A more accurate statement would be that AMBS currently has fewer women as teaching faculty than we did a decade ago. We are blessed with a number of women in administrative leadership: Women serve as academic dean (for degree programs), director of Church Leadership Center (for nondegree and nontraditional learning), campus pastor, director of AMBS Great Plains extension, librarian, director of communication and registrar. Women comprise almost half the governing board.

We at AMBS do not consider the number of women currently serving on the teaching faculty to be adequate. We anticipate increasing the presence of women on the faculty as openings occur over the next several years.

We are grateful for Anabaptist women who are now engaged in doctoral studies in various theological disciplines, and we urge more Millennial women to consider such preparation. AMBS and the church will need you as scholars, teachers and leaders in years ahead.—*Rebecca Slough, AMBS academic dean, Elkhart, Ind.*

Let's keep reading Menno

I was pleased by the two articles in *The Mennonite* during the past year encouraging us to read Menno Simon again: "I Finally Read Menno" by Lawrence Ressler (Jan. 6) and "True Evangelical Faith" by Ted Lewis (July 7). Ressler and Lewis provide a helpful overview of important themes in Menno's writings and highlight some of their favorite texts while suggesting that reading again can help Mennonites recover a broader and deeper understanding of Anabaptist faith.

Neither of them mention "Reply to False Accusations," which is my favorite text from Menno. This publication was a response to the persecution and marginalization of Dutch Anabaptists by civil authorities and thus offers insight into how Mennonites might engage the public sphere by holding governments to account while at the same time witnessing to the peaceable reign of God that is being made visible in the faithful church. In it, Menno argues that the obligation of the magistrate is "to do justice to the widows and orphans, to the poor, despised stranger and pilgrim … to rule cities and countries justly by a good policy and administration not contrary to God's Word, in peace and quiet, unto the benefit and profit of the common people, to rule well." In the same tract he lays out a vision for a peace church where "everything that is seen, heard and done is peace." Let's keep reading and studying Menno.—*Gerald J. Mast, professor of communication, Bluffton (Ohio) University*

IN THIS ISSUE

Just in time for the new Sunday school year, our cover story comes from the venerable leader Robert Kreider (page 8). Kreider describes the delights of his long-time class and says, "As we grow older and our energies diminish, a Sunday school class can remind us there is continuing delight and nutrient in biblical study." There are several major news stories in this issue, as well. Ervin Stutzman has been hired by the Executive Board to replace Jim Schrag as the next executive director for Mennonite Church USA (page 19). In a follow-up to the news we first broke through *TMail* on Aug. 18, Gordon Houser provides a full news story on the presidential transition at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan (page 20). Tim Stoltzfus Jost explains why the proposed health-care legislation should be supported (page 18); the editorial reveals the challenges that very legislation may have for several Mennonite institutions (page 32). The issue generated a record number of responses for our Web site poll (page 5).—*ejt*

Ignore health insurance lobby

I recently attended Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 in Columbus, Ohio, and was dismayed by the amount of time and energy that delegates spent discussing health-care access and the funding required for pastors' health insurance. I am struck by the vitriolic tone of the debate about health care in the United States.

As a Canadian, I am thankful I live in a country that provides adequate and timely health care for all our citizens. I pray that Mennonites in the United States support the provision of health care for all and don't fall victim to fear and misinformation. As a Canadian, let me assure you there is nothing to fear, in spite of what the health insurance lobby in Washington and right-wing factions lead you to believe about Canadian health care. *—Fred W. Martin,Waterloo, Ontario*

Immigration problem must be addressed

People keep telling us that other developed countries have health care for all of their citizens. But no other country has the immigration problem we have. I don't hear anyone addressing that problem. It is huge; we need to address that situation before we adopt an all-inclusive health plan. If only 10 million enroll in the public option plan, where do the other 40 million go?

The philosophy of insurance has always been that many pay a premium to create a pool out of which the fewer sick people's claims are paid. Since insurance for the most part is run by private business, no one would expect them to insure a burning house or a person with a terminal illness. That forces us to consider a government health plan, or for the government to help private insurance with claims for preexisting illnesses. The problem has not been with the insurance pool but with the medical and drug costs. If the federal government steps in and controls the doctors, hospitals and drug company costs, the doctors will flee the profession, and hospitals cannot operate.

We need to solve the immigration problem first, then the health issue will be a different picture. The problem is enormous, and the solutions seem mixed.*—Sanford Oyer, Wooster, Ohio*

Hatred and lies

I have been reading and watching as pastors and members of the church spew hatred, judgment and lies. I am sickened by the name calling, the labeling and so forth with regard to sexual offenders, pedophiles and all the other manufactured labels and names we have for our brothers and sisters in Christ around the globe. Try loving those you dislike or have concerns about and watch it change the world once and for all. I am struggling to be a Christian and to build faith and live with the Holy Spirit as my guide. The role modeling from the brothers and sisters of our faith is disturbing and is causing many to leave, maybe even me.*—Mark D. Brull, Larned, Kan.*

MCC planned to spend down budget

Regarding the News Digest article "MCC Had $8 Million Deficit in 2008-09 Year" (Aug. 17): Entering the 2008-2009 fiscal year, Mennonite Central Committee intended to spend down $5.4 million of reserves. This included $3 million of previously received restricted income for the 2004 tsunami and the 2005 Gulf hurricanes and $2.4 million of other reserved funding. With income less than budgeted, we spent $3 million more from reserves, manageable for that year. Government grants mentioned in the article came almost entirely from Canada. With continued revenue declines this year, program budgets are reduced approximately 10 percent. We're hopeful that, now more than ever, constituency support will help us meet our commitments to the relief, development and peace efforts of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches around the world.*—Arli Klassen, MCC executive director and Rolando Santiago, executive director, MCC U.S.*

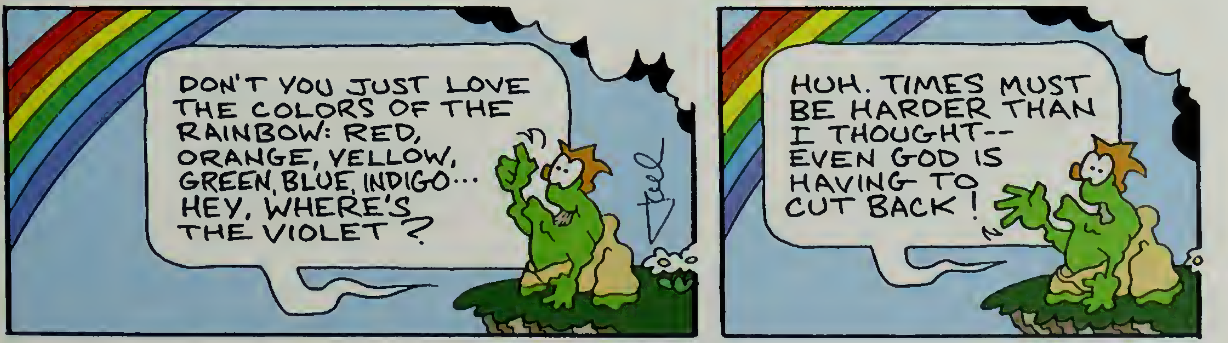
ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Regarding the proposed national health-care plan (261 responses)

- ○ I support it (74%)
- ○ I do not support it (23%)
- ○ I don't understand it (3%)
- ○ Not sure (1%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


DON'T YOU JUST LOVE THE COLORS OF THE RAINBOW: RED, ORANGE, YELLOW, GREEN, BLUE, INDIGO… HEY, WHERE'S THE VIOLET?
HUH. TIMES MUST BE HARDER THAN I THOUGHT-- EVEN GOD IS HAVING TO CUT BACK!

IN BRIEF

Cluster bomb update

A new documentary, *From Harm to Hope: Standing with Cluster Bomb Survivors*, and a study guide are the latest tools in the advocacy work of Mennonite Central Committee U.S. in banning cluster bombs. The documentary tells the story of the movement through the experiences of survivors such as Raed Modaled of Lebanon, Phounsy Phasavaeng of Laos and others.—*MCC*

Landline death

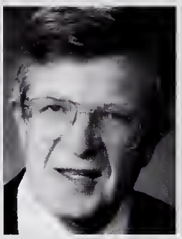
Some analysts now estimate that 25 percent of U.S. households rely entirely on cell phones—a share that could double within the next three years. If the decline of the landline continues at its current rate, the last cord will be cut sometime in 2025.—*The Economist*

New chauvinism?

New brides should do more than vow to love their husbands for a lifetime, say the majority of Americans. Some 70 percent of the respondents in a new study feel they should also take their spouse's surname—and 50 percent say that it should be a legal requirement for a woman to take her spouse's last name. The study was done by the Center for Survey Research at Indiana University, as reported by *USA Today*. —*NYDailyNews.com*

Former editor of *The Mennonite* dies at 84

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—Maynard Shelly, who confronted contentious issues with firm conviction as editor of *The Mennonite* during the 1960s, died Aug. 7 at age 84. Shelly edited the General Conference Mennonite Church's (GC) weekly denominational magazine from 1961 to 1971.

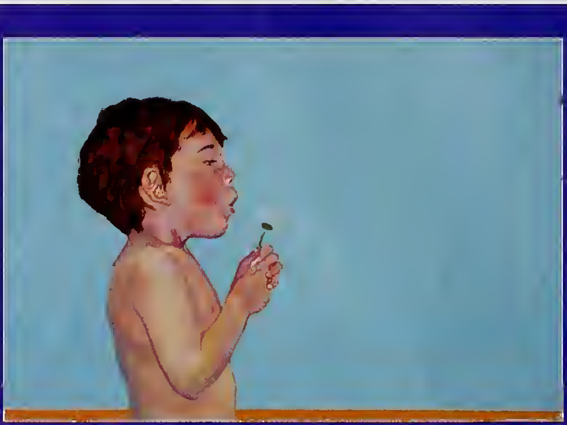

Maynard Shelly

Two key issues for Shelly while editor were the Vietnam War and racial injustice, says Robert Regier, who did layout and artwork for *The Mennonite* from 1959 to 1963. The magazine's content had been more devotional for a readership with a broad range of theological perspectives, he says.

After leaving *The Mennonite* in 1971, Shelly and his wife, Griselda Gehman Shelly—to whom he had been married since Sept. 7, 1945—served with Mennonite Central Committee in Bangladesh until 1974. After that, Shelly wrote scripts for MCC films, Sunday school curricula and magazine articles. He served as pastor at Boynton Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill., from 1946 to 1949 and First Mennonite Church, Allentown, Pa., from 1949 to 1955. From 1955 to 1961 he served as assistant executive secretary of the GC Mennonite Board of Education and Publication and as associate editor of *The Mennonite*.—*Mennonite Weekly Review*

CPTer arrested for praying on Air Force base

TUCSON, Ariz.—On Aug. 6, Hiroshima Day, Franciscan friar Jerry Zawada and Christian Peacemaker Teams member John Heid held a vigil that began at the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, outside Tucson. Zawada and Heid declined to move their vigil off the property or accept a citation, and security personnel transported them to Pima County Jail, where authorities processed and released them a few hours later. They were scheduled for arraignment on Aug. 17 in a Tucson court.—*CPT*


Ramiro Rodriguez

Hispanic artist's work featured in Goshen exhibit

The painting "Pnuema" is one piece in Ramiro Rodriguez's art exhibit that depicts his evolving roles as an artist, husband, father, son and brother. The exhibit, "Forma: Paintings and Prints," is featured at Goshen (Ind.) College Aug. 29-Sept. 25, during Hispanic Heritage Month.—*Goshen College*

MMA resolutions earn shareholder support

GOSHEN, Ind.—Stewardship investing managers for Mennonite Mutual Aid Praxis Mutual Funds are encouraged by the response in their effort to stop predatory credit card practices by the nation's largest banks. MMA believes universal default practices, bait-and-switch marketing, hidden fees, intentionally complicated contracts and similar tactics harm consumers and in turn hurt economic recovery efforts. Three ballot resolutions that MMA Praxis Mutual Funds filed to encourage a change in practices earned relatively strong support from shareholders at corporate annual meetings. They included the following companies in favor: Bank of America, 33.4 percent shareholder votes; Citigroup, 28.4 percent shareholder votes; and JP Morgan Chase, 8.5 percent shareholder votes. "These percentages are high compared with the 3-5 percent shareholder resolutions normally receive, says Mark Regier, MMA's stewardship investing services manager.—*MMA*

200 Amish hear religious freedom history

AKRON, Pa.—At the May 13 meeting of the Old Order Amish Steering Committee outside Fremont, Mich., nearly 200 representatives of Amish communities from 14 states heard retired Lutheran pastor William Lindholm describe the work of the National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom, which he has led since its founding in 1967. Lindholm told the story of how his conscience was stirred in 1966 and 1967 by the treatment of Amish children and their families when they refused to comply with mandatory school attendance laws in Kansas, Iowa and Wisconsin.

The Amish Steering Committee formed in 1966 also attends to numerous public issues involving Old Order groups. Its work has appropriately diminished the advocacy role of the National Committee. Lindholm chairs the committee. Herman Bontrager from Akron, Pa., serving as secretary/treasurer, and Joe Wittmer, retired education professor at the University of Florida at Gainesville, serving as vice chair, also attended the meeting.—*John A. Lapp*

Paul Brubaker

eam mascot makes friends at Lancaster book sale
ylo, the mascot for the Lancaster (Pa.) Barnstormers, visited he Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society's annual used book ale Aug. 12-15. The Barnstormers, an AAA baseball team, ponsors a "Read with the Barnstormers" program.—*LMHS*

Mennonite family safe after Spain bombing

BURGOS, Spain—María José (Chus) García of Burgos Mennonite Church and her baby daughter escaped injury after a car bomb exploded at the police barracks outside their apartment on July 29. Sixty people were injured in the bombing, which a Spanish official said was probably orchestrated by the ETA, a fringe movement of Basque separatists. —*Mennonite Mission Network*

60 for Hope raises $60K for homeless mothers

LANCASTER, Pa.—"60 for Hope," raised over $60,000 to end homelessness for single mothers and their children in Lancaster and Chester counties in Pennsylvania. Sponsored by Bridge of Hope Lancaster & Chester Counties, this July 25 event was the dream of Kate Kooker of East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, who turns 60 this year. Kooker's goal was to cycle 60 miles with 60 friends to raise $60,000 for the organization she helped start 21 years ago, inspired by growing up as a child of a single mother. Kooker's 87-year-old mother, Kathryn Hess of Mount Joy (Pa.) Mennonite Church, rode five miles on a tricycle to honor single mothers like herself. Fifty-one years ago, when her husband died, Hess suddenly became a widow and a single mother of five children, ages 3 to 13.—*Bridge of Hope Lancaster & Chester Counties*

Penner to represent on Peace Tax Fund board

NEWTON, Kan.—Mennonite Church USA Executive Board has appointed Harold A. Penner of Akron, Pa., to represent the denomination on the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund board. Replacing Steve Ratzlaff, Penner will begin the three-year appointment next year.

New leadership on this board complements the Executive Board's June 30 reaffirmation of the church's long-held endorsement of the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill (H.R. 2085) in the U.S. Congress.—*Mennonite Church USA*

MEA welcomes proposals for education grant

GOSHEN, Ind.—Mennonite Education Agency of Mennonite Church USA invites proposals for grants from its Fund for Peoplehood Education, a donor-restricted term endowment. The fund supports initiatives that promote the distinctive features of church-sponsored education and encourage strong ties between Mennonite Church USA and its schools.

Priority is given to projects that strengthen church-school ties and interpret the distinctive features of Mennonite-Anabaptist education and that cultivate educational leadership among younger members of Mennonite Church USA. The deadline is Sept. 30. For fund policies and an application form, email MEA at info@MennoniteEducation.org or call 866-866-2872.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Bethel opens first campus ministries house

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—The small brown structure known as Richert House, near the Fine Arts Center, is set to become Bethel College's first campus ministries house.

Dale Schrag, director of church relations and campus pastor for Bethel College, North Newton, got the idea from *The Chaplain's Handbook*, whose author suggests, "If you can have a house for campus ministries, it is incredibly helpful," Schrag says.

Another driving factor in the project was student requests for a place to hold Bible studies and discussion groups. Schrag approached Ruth Harder, associate pastor of Bethel College Mennonite Church, and the church promised about $5,000 in memorial money as well as manual labor to help make the dream a reality. The house will also offer office space for any pastors from churches in the community who would like to hold office hours there. Plans were to have the campus ministries house open by the time students arrive on campus Aug. 28.—*Bethel College*

—*compiled by Anna Groff*

IN BRIEF

Swartzendruber Miller to lead conventions

Rachel Swartzendruber Miller was appointed director of Convention Planning for Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership in mid-July. Miller, Phoenix, Ariz., was named to the post after Jorge Vallejos, director, announced his resignation. Miller has helped plan conventions in her associate role since 2006. She is pursuing a doctorate in leadership theory in the School of Education from Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich.—*Mennonite Church USA*

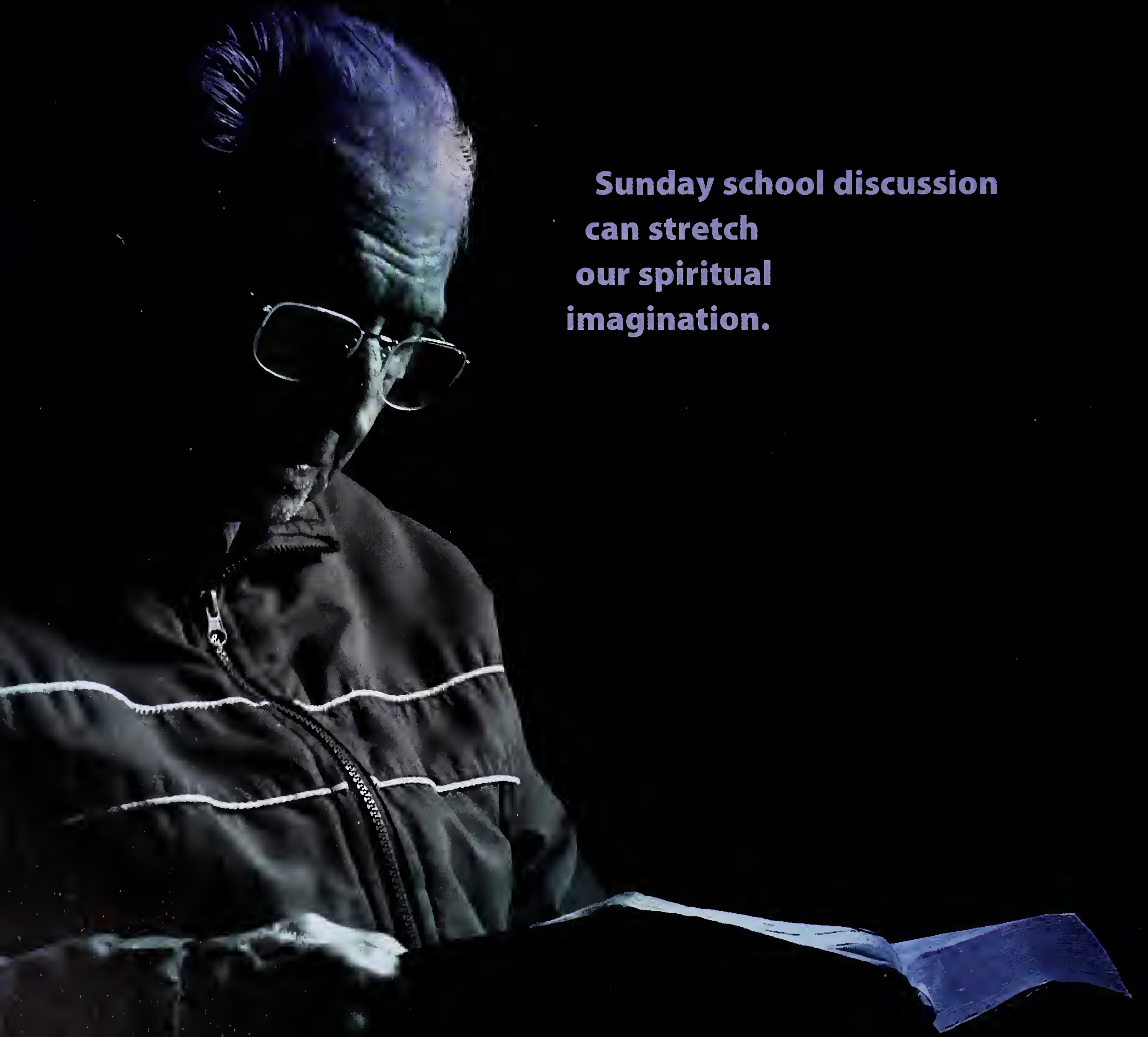
Sustainable ideas?

What are you doing to live more simply and sustainably? Mark Beach and Mary Beth Lind, authors of the new Mennonite Publishing Network book *Simply Sustainable*, want to know. *Simply Sustainable* is scheduled for release in the fall of 2010. To offer a submission, go to www.simply-sustainable.org/.—*MPN*

Our Sunday

by Robert Kreider

Lessons from a Sunday school class of seniors



Sunday school discussion can stretch our spiritual imagination.

school class

One of the joys of my aging years is the Sunday school class I teach at Faith Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan. We sit around a long table in a classroom that doubles as the health and wellness room. As one who has difficulty hearing, I like it that at the table we lean in toward each other as we speak, our quarterlies and Bibles on the table before us. We are the senior class—most of us in our 80s, all of us retired. We study our Mennonite Church Adult Bible quarterly, several using the large-print edition.

We bring to our class varied experiences: two school teachers, a school librarian, a former pastor, three merchants, a builder, a college professor, a factory worker, a farmer, several office workers. Six have graduated from college. All but four grew up on farms. Most attended one-room schools. Among us are five widows and two widowers. In the past we have been involved in various leadership positions in the congregation. Now we are learning to decrease as others increase. During the past several years we have helped one another bear the sorrow of death in the family. Around the table is a lot of accumulated living.

We are a kind of extended family. We enjoy being together. At the beginning of the hour we take time to share experiences of the week past and plans for the week to come. We talk of health, trips to the hospital, cancer in remission, broken bones. We share the joys and heartaches of children and grandchildren, trips and family gatherings, church and community events. Absent is talk about the recession and little about political events. We are an upbeat group, ready to encourage and bless each other. When the closing buzzer sounds, we often linger for more sharing, more to talk about. A class member reports that her son calls her from Chicago every Sunday afternoon. Invariably she shares with him what happened in Sunday school class that morning.

We may wish our class were more intergenerational, with some younger voices at the table. In discussing the lesson and in the sharing, some of us talk more than others, but most times, everyone shares something. We offer differing views but never a sharp argument or any intimation of anger. We are comfortable with each other. Although some of us have been activists in our day, we now are more subdued in our passions. We prefer now to encourage and bless those who are busy in kingdom work.

Each Sunday we review again Scripture we have studied many times before. That doesn't mean class sessions are dull. Invariably members bring fresh insights to the old and familiar. Often this is triggered by a class member puzzled with a biblical passage. Our class members, firmly rooted in their Christian faith, cannot be faulted for lack of

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

soundness of doctrine. That permits them to be relaxed in asking questions, even voicing an occasional doubt. Some may cheerfully acknowledge that sometimes they skip over difficult biblical passages and move on to what they do understand.

I am intrigued how a group of older people can identify with biblical people. For example, Elizabeth and Mary, one older and the other younger, each anticipating the birth of a first child. Mothers in the class engage in reflecting on what two expectant mothers might be discussing. They puzzle over how the two, separated by a two- or three-day walking journey—no postal service, telephones or email—might have kept in touch with each other. How would these two mothers parent their precocious sons, John and Jesus?

Then there are the husbands—Zechariah and Joseph—both good men but understandably perplexed by mystifying events. Class members speculate on how those two men might have sought to cope with the bewildering events unfolding. Add to this other intriguing topics on which the Bible is silent: How might Joseph have tutored his son in the trade of carpentry? And did Jesus, the Son of God, ever make mistakes requiring fatherly correction? Class members can bring a practical immediacy to biblical study.

In a study of Exodus, the class considers the story of the two Hebrew midwives—Shiphrah and Puah—who sidestep giving a clear answer to a direct question. Class members have had experience with truth telling and truth evasion. Amusing stories are shared. The biblical record sparkles with added energy as a class brings a heap of living to an understanding of familiar biblical events.

We were studying the story in Joshua of the Israelites forming a procession to follow the ark across the Jordan River. A class member, drawing on her experience in Africa, reflected on the spiritual significance of processions in worship and liturgical events. This led to identifying the role of processions in weddings and funeral services, commencements and inaugurations, the entrance and exit of a choir, the filing into the worship area of pastors and worship leaders. Thoughts connected to other processions in the Bible: the Palm Sunday procession, Jesus bearing the cross on the way to Golgotha. Then someone wondered whether the Anabaptists incorporated processions in their patterns of worship. Sunday school discussion can stretch our spiritual imagination.

Our peace-minded class has wrestled with vexing issues associated with the Israelite invasion of the land occupied by the Philistines. We squirm uncomfortably when Joshua's forces (our team) use spies, mass killing and ethnic cleansing to achieve victory. We listen for the voice of Jehovah above the clash of swords and chariots. As followers of Christ we seek to discern how we should walk in the footsteps of Jesus as we wend through violent biblical history.

One of the joys of our class is that it provides occasions for us to tell our stories—usually relevant to the text, sometimes a bit distant. But they are our stories, and we want to share them: a grandmother reporting the bits of wisdom of a grandchild, after Katrina a couple visiting house to house among old friends in Gulf Port, Miss., the art and grace of greeting customers in a shoe store, stories from volunteering in the Mennonite Central Committee Et Cetera Shop, befriending Old Colony immigrants from Mexico.

As we grow older and our energies diminish, a Sunday school class can remind us there is continuing delight and nutrient in biblical study. Weaving imagination and experience into the fabric of God's story, we continue to grow as a blessed community in Christ. Thus blessed, we are called to share these blessings with others.

Robert Kreider is a member of Faith Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

ADULT BIBLE STUDY
Call ... with promise

Dee Birkey, photo collage

Sight singing

by Hannah Faith Notess

New to the hymnal,
I fumbled forward, note by note, unsure
which stone in the river

to step on next. The water rumbled with centuries
of voices, and under
the book, our fingers touched, sparking

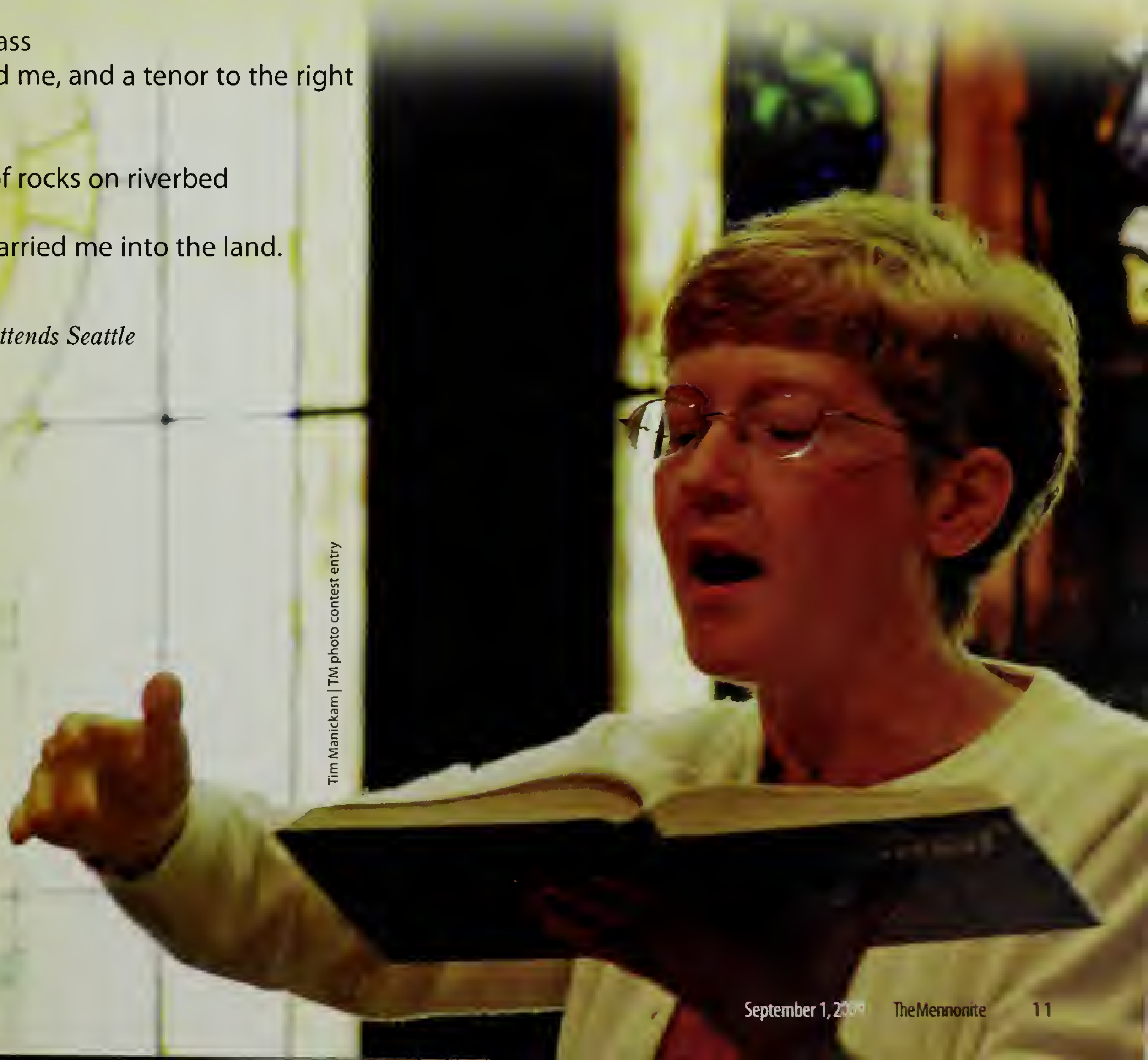
a descant that flowed out
into next year. When the priest called "Lift up
your hearts," she sounded

like hers was held already in God's hand.
And when I heard
the gravel rasp in your throat, a little flat,

even though one bass
note swelled behind me, and a tenor to the right
shifted his weight,

it was your scrape of rocks on riverbed
that ferried me
downstream, that carried me into the land.

Hannah Faith Notess attends Seattle Mennonite Church.



Tim Manickam | TM photo contest entry

A mentor make

by Wilma Gundy

My dream of being a teacher started in seventh grade, when I had a teacher I idolized. I attended a country one-room school where Miss Morton taught grades one through eight. Consequently, she sometimes needed help with reading for the first and second graders. I was a willing aide and in the process of teaching them an R, I received my own three Rs—Responsibility, Respect and the Right to talk with Miss Morton. I shared with her my impossible dream, and she urged me to try for it.

My parents said, 'There's no money for that nonsense.' After all, as a girl, I'd just get married anyway, and no one needed an education to raise kids.

However, when I was ready to start high school in 1942, my dream crashed on the rocks of reality. My parents, struggling to make a living for nine children on a farm on the arid plains of eastern Colorado, were love-rich and cash-poor. Providing food and clothing for us was top priority, and getting an education was a luxury for people with far more money than we had.

Public high schools are free, but we lived southwest of Limon, Colo., just inside the Elbert County line. Thus, I was supposed to go to high school in Kiowa, 10 miles away. However, there was no way to get there, as our one truck was tied up with necessary farm chores. The bus from Limon schools came within a half mile of our farm, but we would have to pay tuition to go there since we were not in Lincoln County. My parents said, "There's no money for that nonsense." After all, as a girl, I'd just get married anyway, and no one needed an education to raise kids. Keenly disappointed, I felt crushed. What was I to do?

For several years, my brothers and sisters and I had attended a small Mennonite church located a half mile from our farm. Our minister, George Holdeman, also taught at our local elementary school. He proposed a possible solution: He would provide the books for me, and I could come to the school and study independently. He would be available during lunch or after school to answer any questions I might have. Under the circumstances, the folks agreed that I could try. After all, I'd still be available for chores and to babysit my younger siblings.

I missed the first two months of school that year picking corn and doing farm chores. Starting in November, I walked the mile and a half to school. With Rev. Holdeman's encouragement, I studied English, world history, algebra, typing, shorthand and science, giving me six of the credits required at that time for graduation.

Everyone can be a mentor to someone.

s a difference

To continue high school the next year, Rev. Holdeman encouraged me to attend Hesston (Kan.) College and Academy. To go there would take even more money. And I'd no longer be available to help on the farm. I pleaded with them to allow me to go, since I so much wanted an education so I could be a doctor. "We can't afford it," they said. I'm sure my mentor persuaded my parents to let me try, again by offering a means for me to earn some money.

The finances for that year of school came from three sources: My mentor arranged for me to babysit his brother's children in La Junta, Colo., during the summer. Another source of money was a small donation from the members of the local Mennonite church. The third source of income was a pig. The pigs on our farm lived in foul-smelling pens and ate the slop cast off from our kitchen scraps. In the summertime, they wallowed in mud holes to cool off. But when a sow had a litter of piglets and one of them had a twisted snout and could not nurse, Dad told me that if I would bottle-feed it until it could eat, I could have the money when it was sold. I gladly accepted the foul-smelling piglet and bottle-fed it for weeks. The Walrus in Alice in Wonderland wonders "whether pigs have wings." I know the $30 I got from my pig "bank" and the help from Rev. Holdeman gave me the wings to continue my education.

Three summers before I left for Hesston College, Rev. Holdeman loaned me what he said was an old tennis racket (I realize now he must have especially purchased it for me) and taught me to play tennis. Tennis has been a keen interest of mine ever since. I played in tournaments in high school and college and continued to play for years until I was put on oxygen because of damage to my lungs from Guillain-Barre Syndrome, which I developed after taking the swine-flu vaccination. Today I can't play except mentally. I eagerly await the start of each Grand Slam and cheer on my favorite players on TV.

After I finished my first year at Hesston, I had earned five credits and thought I'd need only five more to be a senior the following year. However, the dean of the school called me in and said: "Wilma, we have a problem. None of the six credits that you did in independent study was registered in Elbert County. What do you think we can do?" I had to admit I had no idea. I confessed that I did not know how I could afford one more year of high school, let alone two.

He called a meeting of the faculty. They, too, were my mentors, as they came up with a plan to grant me credits: Since I had passed the next level of courses in English, world history and algebra with all A's, they offered to grant me credit on that basis. They required that I pass a proficiency test in typing and shorthand, and somehow I managed to pass them. That left only science. The science teacher thought his course would be compromised unless I took every test the other students had taken in the course all year. During commencement week, while everyone else was celebrating, I studied the entire text, took 20 tests and passed. I could be a senior the next year.

During the summer between my junior and senior years, Rev. Holdeman not only taught me to drive his car (on the farm the boys were taught to drive the truck and tractor, but we girls were needed to do housework and other mundane chores), he also loaned me his car to drive the 7.5 miles into Limon to assist him in his radio repair shop. He wisely did not trust me to repair the radios, but I could answer the phone, assist customers in writing up repair orders or order parts from the catalog. I realize now I really didn't earn the money he paid me, but it was another way he could help without making me feel I was a beggar.

During commencement week, while everyone else was celebrating, I studied the entire text, took 20 tests and passed.

Throughout the years of my high school and college education, I went to the business office to pay my bill and learned that some anonymous donor had made a small payment on it. I knew it had to be Rev. Holdeman. He was unmarried, and I believe he felt the few dollars he could afford were well spent in helping with my education.

I also credit him with teaching me the basis of my Christian ethics. In his sermons at our local church, he emphasized the significant role women

Continued on page 14

Continued from page 13

have, influencing their families and forming the nucleus of local churches. It is their leadership, he said, that gives society its moral compass.

Another tenet of my personal ethics is integrity. Based on, "Thou shalt not steal," Rev. Holdeman emphasized a far stricter standard than is usually associated with that teaching. He stressed that if one took even a postage stamp, at that time worth three cents, then one was just as guilty of stealing as if he had stolen several thousand dollars. I assure you I have stolen neither.

Rev. Holdeman had Type 1 diabetes. As a bachelor he was not consistent in his food intake or in his administration of the insulin on which he was dependent. Thus, he frequently had low sugar, during which he was incoherent, acting as if he were drunk. On more than one occasion, he was stopped by the police because of his erratic behavior and was once taken to jail, since he was incapable of explaining his problem. It is difficult for society to understand afflictions when they are not likewise afflicted. Hence, he became a kind of pariah in the community. In time he had to resign the church and move to La Junta, Colo., where he had relatives. Many years later I heard of his untimely death.

I regret that after I graduated from college and married, I lost all contact and never adequately thanked him for the tremendous assistance and encouragement he gave me and how immeasurably he enriched my life. Without him, I would never have had a high school education, let alone college and postgraduate work.

I calculate that over my professional lifetime I have taught or counseled over 20,000 students. After retirement from teaching, I obtained my Colorado license as a therapist and did volunteer counseling at my church. Thus, my mentor's kindness and generosity kept giving throughout my lifetime and beyond. Mentorship is not a talent and does not require riches. Everyone can be a mentor to someone.

Malcom Gladwell, in his newest book, *Outliers*, writes, "No one—not rock stars, not professional athletes, not software billionaires and not even geniuses—ever makes it alone." And certainly not naïve farm girls.

George, this is my belated, heartfelt thanks to you, my mentor.

Wilma Gundy lives in Arvada, Colo.

A different view through introspection

Perfection or

by Oris Schrag

Many times I have wondered what my role is here on Earth. Why was I put here? What is my purpose? What am I doing to make this world a better place? I have also wondered about the odd collection of talents and weaknesses I see in myself. The cards in the game of life given to me that I have tried to make sense of over the past 50 years.

I have a good sense of humor but a lousy memory. I have good people skills but can't remember names. I am a relational person but an introvert. I have good communication skills but hate talking in front of large groups. I like to spend time by myself but frequently start conversations with people I don't know. I love to travel but have a lousy sense of direction. My memory does not allow me to learn a second language. My body is beginning to break down. My left index finger had to be amputated because of an accident. I had my knees replaced last summer.

Why did God put such a weird mixture of talents, physical weaknesses and ineptness in one person?

Why did God put such a weird mixture of talents, physical weaknesses and ineptness in one person? What is his purpose? Often I have thought how much stronger I would be if I did not have a bad memory or if I had a better sense of direction, a stronger body or better public speaking skills.

The map in your head: As time passes, though, I have pretty much given up improving my memory. I still get embarrassed when I can't remember someone's name I should know, and I'm not too proud to have my wife navigate for me when we are traveling. When my oldest daughter was 7 years old, she said, "Daddy, the map in your head does not work as good as the map in Mommy's head, does it?"

How can these parts of me, the things I have wished I could change, actually be positives?

By profession I am a school social worker. Throughout the course of my career I have listened to much pain, suffering, hurt and grief from

mperfection

many of my students and their families as they struggle with life issues. Because of my poor memory, I have come to realize I will not have to carry their pain and suffering long. I may remember general things about what they are going through, but without writing notes, the details quickly fade. Their names are gone not long after. My humor, though, seems always to return. Somehow, timely and appropriate humor seems to have a way of helping people cope.

I see many Hispanic students at the high school where I work. I use a translator to communicate with parents when needed. My inability to learn Spanish has probably helped some of the families accept me sooner; especially the ones who struggle to speak English. They see me as human. I, like them, struggle in another language. Together, with the aid of an interpreter, we laugh about our language struggles.

Sometimes I am asked to do home visits and provide transportation for students and parents. I carry a map in my car and use it. However, this does not cover completely for my poor navigational skills. Frequently I will take a wrong turn. When providing transportation for a parent or a student, a wrong turn has been the icebreaker in forming a relationship. I couldn't build a trusting relationship with a person I saw as perfect. There is something about the human element, the lack of perfection, that allows conversation to get past surface topics.

Fingerman: One of my former students could never remember my name. Because of my missing finger, he called me Fingerman. For the two years he was at our school he never called me by my name, only Fingerman. One summer I saw him at a Quiktrip but did not recognize him. Since I was meeting someone to carpool with, I was concerned about leaving my pickup parked there, especially with a kid that seemed to have nothing to do. "Hey, Fingerman, what's up?" he greeted me as I stepped out of my pickup. Immediately I knew who he was, and I knew my truck was safe parked there.

During enrollment I met a mother who was using a walker. I found out she had her knee replaced about a month later than I had both of mine replaced. I do not remember her name, although she introduced herself to me, but I know who she is. I see her in the hall from time to time, and we compare notes on how we are doing. It's amazing what creates bonds between people.

Correction: In the box on page 15 in the Aug. 18 issue, Jakob (not Jacob) Lepp was indigenous languages coordinator and trained volunteers who had never interpreted simultaneously before.

Over a period of time I have come to see that my deficits are actually strengths. Although it has taken me a while to realize it, I now know that who I am as a person, all of me, serves in my career as a school social worker. I guess God did create me in his own image, perfect in my imperfections.

There is something about the human element, the lack of perfection, that allows conversation to get past surface topics.

How many times do we sell ourselves short because we spend time focusing on our imperfections instead of accepting ourselves for who we are? Maybe we should trust that there is a purpose for our flaws. After all, there are worse things in life than being called Fingerman.

Oris Schrag is a member of Faith Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.

When God
doesn't

What do you do when God asks you to do so

by Richard Spillman

I sat in my favorite chair in the prayer room at home and asked God, "What do you want me to do to help Billy and his family?" I was surprised when God told me to pay Billy's bill. It wasn't in words; I just suddenly knew that was what I was to do.

I didn't know Billy; in fact I had never met him. He was a friend of a friend. My friend, Connie, had just called to ask if I could help Billy and his family, who were being evicted from their apartment because they used drugs. If that wasn't enough, the landlady was threatening to take them to court because their young son had badly damaged the bathroom.

The landlady was not an evil person wanting to throw this innocent family onto the streets. Billy had brought this on himself. Nothing I could do would stop the eviction, and why should I pay for the destruction in the bathroom? It was a lot of money, and I could think of many ways to put it to better use. Yet God was telling me to use that money to help Billy. It didn't make sense. In spite of my misgivings, I called Madison, the landlady, and told her I would pay the bill on the condition she not tell Billy who provided the funds. I explained that God wanted this bill paid anonymously. She told me that as a Christian she understood what I was doing and thanked me for being obedient to God. More than a year passed before I understood why God asked me to do this.

Sometimes things happen in our lives that defy explanation.

Sometimes things happen in our lives that defy explanation. No matter how hard we try we can't make any sense out of the things God puts in our path. Yet if we remain faithful and patient, God often puts all the pieces together and reveals his purpose. He truly works in mysterious ways.

Consider the case of Joshua and the battle for Jericho. There are established ways to storm a heavily fortified city. For example, build siege towers and breach the walls. So imagine Joshua's surprise when God told him to send the priests, not the soldiers, to march around the city and blow horns. I can picture the taunts from the people of Jericho standing on the walls watching this absurd display. It just didn't make sense—until the seventh day, when the walls fell down.

Consider David, a man after God's own heart. After years of running from the man who wanted him dead, he discovered Saul alone and vulnerable in a cave. David could have brought his private war to an end with a single blow from his sword. Yet God did not allow him to kill Saul that day. It didn't make sense, but it taught David a valuable lesson. He learned to respect the will of God.

Consider poor Ananias of Damascus. God called him to go and minister to Saul, the man who had come to Damascus to arrest, torment and even kill Christians like Ananias. It didn't make sense yet it turned out to be the first step in unleashing the most powerful ministry the world has ever seen.

God is full of surprises. He often asks us to do things that run counter to all common sense. So what would you do if God asked you to do something that didn't make sense? What if it was something so foolish that all your friends advised against it? Before you answer, let me tell you how my story ended.

After giving Madison the funds, I was called in several

Dreamstime.com

ing that just doesn't seem to make any sense?

times to mediate between Billy and Madison. Eventually the family moved out, and we never heard from Billy again. Occasionally I thought about the money, especially when other needs came up. At those times I wondered what God was doing. A year later, God sent me to see Madison again, and that is when I discovered exactly what God had been up to.

My wife, Bonnie, and I have had an ongoing ministry with the homeless in Tacoma, Wash. We help lead a church service as part of a Sunday morning breakfast. We do our best to help find housing, occasionally give out bus passes and continually pray for our friends on the streets. One Sunday we met Dianne and her adult son Joshua. They had only been on the streets for a few weeks and were having a difficult time adjusting to life there. They were desperate to find a new home.

We helped them as best we could. Eventually we found an apartment in their limited price range and helped them fill out an application. But three days later we learned they were rejected because of something on their background check. The apartment manager would not tell us what the problem was, but after talking with Dianne we ruled out anything drug related and assumed it was because of her outstanding debt.

We went on the search again. This time we found an affordable apartment where the manager would overlook any debt less than $5,000. Dianne assured us her debts were far below that limit, so we submitted another application. The next day it was rejected. This time they told us the reason. The background check revealed that Dianne and Joshua had been evicted from their last apartment.

We now knew we had a battle on our hands. It is difficult to find an apartment for anyone with an eviction history. I didn't know what to do. I had no idea how to proceed. Every door was closed, or so I thought. One day God reminded me of Madison, the apartment manager I had worked with a year ago. He told me to take Dianne and Joshua to see Madison because she would provide a home for them.

I picked up Dianne and Joshua and drove them to Madison's apartments. I had not called ahead to make an appointment, but as I drove up to the parking lot, Madison was standing outside, as if she was waiting for us. I jumped out of the car and asked if she remembered me. She told me she did. Then I told her about Dianne. I was honest about the eviction and asked if she had any apartments open. One was available immediately. They still needed to fill out the application and pass a background check. Madison told me that because she trusted me she would overlook the past eviction. If everything I had told her was true and there were no criminal activities in their background (there weren't), they could have the apartment.

The rest of the timeline of this miracle is like a blur. By Tuesday they were approved to move in. On Saturday I picked them up and helped them move in their bed and other items that had been in storage. It was their last day living on the streets.

Doing what God asks, even when it doesn't make sense, is an exercise in faith.

Paying Billy's bill made no sense to me at the time, but now it is totally clear why God asked me to do it. The lesson I learned is that sometimes God asks strange things of us. Yet he always has a purpose and sometimes will let us know that purpose. Whether the purpose is revealed or not, we can always find comfort in Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

When God doesn't make sense, there are two things I know for certain. First, the problem is not with God but with me. It is the result of my limited ability to see the whole picture. Second, those times when God doesn't make sense are the times when his power shines. Doing what God asks, even when it doesn't make sense, is an exercise in faith. Ultimately your faith is strengthened, life becomes an adventure and you have the opportunity to participate in a miracle. So when God does not make sense, I am drawn to Proverbs 3:5: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight."

Richard Spillman lives in Fircrest, Wash.

Correction: **Joinone, the Ayoreo chief with the spear mentioned on pages 10 and 17 in the Aug. 18 issue, was not the son of the man who killed Kornelius Isaak in 1958 but the man who killed Isaak.**

make sense

Healing, hope and health-care reform

Tim Stoltzfus Jost is a professor at the Washington and Lee University School of Law and a member of Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of *The Mennonite*, the board for The Mennonite, Inc., or Mennonite Church USA.

In Luke 4, Jesus began his ministry on earth by claiming Isaiah's message of healing and hope for the oppressed. Throughout his ministry, Jesus healed the sick and preached good news to the poor. After his death and resurrection, the church has carried on this ministry.

Today our country wants to make the healing power of modern health care available to all. While all other wealthy nations insure all their citizens, the United States has 50 million uninsured people. Each month, tens of thousands more people lose insurance. The United States has the most costly health-care system in the world. Although we lead the world in medical innovation, we rank 19th in avoidable mortality from disease.

One Senate and three House committees have now passed health-reform bills. All are complicated bills addressing a complicated subject.

The provisions of the bills are similar. All expand Medicaid, the current program for poor Americans, so that all Americans earning less than 133 percent of the poverty level (which is $10,830 for an individual or $22,050 for a family of four) would be eligible. The bills also provide "affordability credits" to help uninsured lower- and middle-income families earning up to 400 percent of poverty purchase health insurance. These subsidies diminish on a sliding scale as income rises. Because the average employment-related family insurance policy costs $12,680, subsidies are necessary to make health insurance affordable even to middle-income Americans.

The proposed legislation bans pre-existing conditions insurance clauses and discrimination based on health status. It assures that insurance is available to those who need it most. The legislation also establishes "exchanges" so purchasers can find and purchase the insurance that best meets their needs. It may include a public plan. In many markets, private insurance is not competitive. In Harrisonburg, Va., one insurer controls 86 percent of the market. A public plan would bring down prices by offering an alternative. Although some fear the public plan would drive private insurance companies out of business, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that only nine to 10 million Americans would enroll in the public plan.

The proposed legislation requires larger employers to offer insurance to their employees or pay a penalty. Most Americans are already insured through their jobs. Many would see improved coverage. Individuals would have the security of knowing that if they lose their job, they will not lose their insurance. Small businesses would be given special assistance.

Finally, the legislation includes many improvements in the Medicare program, initiatives to increase the availability of primary care and to encourage healthier lifestyles and new ideas for improving the quality and reducing the cost of health care.

The legislation does not encourage euthanasia, as some suggest. It may offer Medicare funding to allow doctors to discuss with their patients responsible end-of-life care, a basic stewardship issue for Christians. Under recent House amendments, the law prohibits public funding for abortions other than for cases of rape, incest or life endangerment. It does not require rationing of care, although it promotes research to help distinguish effective from wasteful care.

The legislation may cost $600 billion to $1 trillion over the next 10 years, a high cost but just 3 percent of the total estimated cost of our health-care system over the next 10 years if we change nothing. Much of the cost would be covered by cost-savings within the health-care system, savings that may grow over time.

There are differences of opinion about how best to reform our health-care system, but two things are clear. Our current system is not viable—health care and insurance costs continue to grow, and Americans are losing health insurance at unsustainable rates. Second, the private sector won't solve these problems on its own; public intervention is necessary at least to provide health care for the poorest among us.

Mennonite Church USA adopted a national health-care resolution in the 2009 delegate assembly. It asks members to urge their legislators to support legislation extending access to all Americans, especially the poor and disadvantaged. It did not endorse particular proposals. As we speak to our legislators, may we, like Christ, hold healing and hope for the poor and oppressed as our highest priority. TM

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Lessons from living in a retirement community**—Evan Oswald
- **Spiritual needs of the elderly**—Beth Landis

Stutzman named executive director

Former Mennonite Church USA moderator moves into top staff position.

Mennonite Church USA Executive Board named Ervin R. Stutzman of Harrisonburg, Va., the denomination's next executive director at a special meeting held Aug. 25.

"Ervin is the right person for this time in our denominational history," says Mennonite Church USA moderator and Executive Board member Ed Diller, Fort Thomas, Ky. "His experiences in the church and his commitment to the healing and hope vision of Mennonite Church USA will serve him well in this role."

Stutzman is vice president and seminary dean and professor of church ministries at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Harrisonburg. He served on the Executive Board for Mennonite Church USA from 1999 to 2005 and as denominational moderator from 2001 to 2003. He expects to begin as executive director in early 2010. No decision has yet been made about where he and his family will live.

A search committee of 10 members from across the denomination unanimously recommended Stutzman during meetings held earlier this month.

"Ervin is an energetic, strong pastoral leader with exceptional organizational and administrative gifts. He is a good listener and focused collaborator," says search committee chair David L. Sutter, South Bend, Ind. "I believe Ervin will lead with Christ at the center as together we consider and live into new directions in line with the dreams God has for Mennonite Church USA."

Born in Iowa, Stutzman grew up in Kansas. He served on pastoral teams at Mennonite Christian Assembly in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Mount Joy Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa. He worked as associate director of home ministries at Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. An ordained minister and bishop, he was moderator of Lancaster Mennonite Conference before beginning at EMU in 1998.

"I love Mennonite Church USA," says Stutzman. "It's an affirmation and a privilege to be asked to serve in this role. It's also a sober responsibility. The Spirit-led search process gives me confidence that God is calling me to this role. By God's grace, we as a Mennonite church can face the future with hope. We have a significant place in God's mission in the world. As we collectively walk in the Spirit, we will experience God's amazing power happening at all levels."

Appointed in January, the search committee talked with and listened to the church, contacted and interviewed leaders and listened for the Holy Spirit's guidance.

"We were very fortunate to have many gifted leaders to choose from," says search committee member Patricia Shelly, Newton, Kan. "Ervin's proven record of serving people and the church in a variety of capacities and his experience in key denominational roles set him apart."

The search committee also sees the new executive director as an excellent communicator and trusted leader, according to member Juanita Nuñez, Ocoee, Fla. "Ervin will articulate the vision, mission and priorities of Mennonite Church USA well. He is committed to God and the church."

Stutzman received his bachelor's degree in Bible and Christian ministries at Cincinnati Christian University. He graduated with a master's degree in communication arts from the University of Cincinnati, a master of arts in religion degree from Eastern Mennonite Seminary and a doctorate in rhetoric and communication from Temple University, Philadelphia.

Stutzman has authored several books. Among his recent Herald Press publications are *Emma: A Widow Among the Amish*, *Tobias of the Amish* and *Being God's People: Embracing Christian Faith from a Mennonite Perspective*. His historical study on Mennonite peace rhetoric is expected to be published next year.

Stutzman will continue his work at EMU through December.

"Ervin has provided wise and innovative leadership to the seminary," Fred Kniss, Eastern Mennonite University provost, says. "While we at EMU certainly regret losing him as a colleague and administrator, we know that Mennonite Church USA will benefit from his skills and experience."

Stutzman and his wife, Bonita Lee Stutzman, attend Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg. They have three adult children—Emma, Daniel and Benjamin.—*June Krehbiel*

I love Mennonite Church USA. It's an affirmation and a privilege to be asked to serve in this role. It's also a sober responsibility. —Ervin Stutzman

Bethel board ousts Bartel as president

Bartel leaves after three years; John K. Sheriff named interim president.

Vada Snider

Barry Bartel with student Blake Johnson from Topeka, Kan. (left), at Bethel College's 2009 commencement.

As of Aug. 16, Barry Bartel is no longer president of Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. The Bethel College Board of Directors met Aug. 15 and informed Bartel the next day of the change.

Board chair Mel Goering, Santa Fe, N.M., said in a statement posted to the college's Web site, "The Board acknowledges and expresses appreciation for the tireless dedication of Barry Bartel and his family during the last three years."

Goering also announced that John K. Sheriff, Ernest L. Leisy professor of English and current executive vice president for institutional development, will become interim president, effective immediately.

The issue at stake was leadership confidence . . . there was no scandal.—Mel Goering

Sheriff filled this role for a year, 2005-06, between the presidential tenures of E. Laverne Epp and Bartel.

The Bethel board has begun a presidential search process and "will proceed as rapidly as possible to secure a person with the requisite experience and talent to foster the mission of the college," Goering said, and they will look for someone "with energy ... and able to make bold decisions."

In an Aug. 17 email to Bethel faculty and staff, Bartel wrote, "While I disagree [with the board's decision] and while this is very painful, I will do everything I can to help ensure that the transition is smooth and that it helps to strengthen Bethel College."

In an Aug. 19 interview, Goering said, "The issue at stake was leadership confidence."

He said Bartel did not have adequate confidence from the employees and organizational structure to face the significant challenges Bethel faces.

He made it clear that "there was no scandal," that Bartel had done nothing wrong ethically.

Goering said the board carried out "a significant, exhaustive process, ... a comprehensive review."

He said that Bartel "has done incredible things in building links between the college and the church," but the board is obligated to make decisions that are in the best interest of the college.

In an interview the same day, Bartel reiterated that he disagrees with the decision but wants to do all he can to support Bethel's mission.

He said he first heard on July 29 about the board's concern about confidence in his ability to lead Bethel through this difficult time.

Then on Aug. 13 he met with Bethel's executive committee, which said it planned to recommend to the board that he be let go.

Bartel had a five-year contract with Bethel, and this was the first review he had received, he said.

John K. Sheriff

While his family will move out of their house this month, they plan to stay in the area.

Brenda, his wife, teaches school in nearby Peabody and leads a community children's choir.

Bethel is one of five Mennonite colleges in Mennonite Church USA. Two of its board members, Goering said, are appointed by the denomination's Mennonite Education Agency. Otherwise, MEA has not been involved.

In an Aug. 18 email, MEA Executive Director Carlos Romero confirmed that MEA has not been involved in this process.

"We stand ready to provide our assistance," Romero said, "to the Bethel College Board of Directors and John Sheriff as acting president as they lead the institution during challenging times."—*Gordon Houser*

FAQs regarding The Corinthian Plan

Keith Harder answers frequently asked questions at Convention 2009.

The Corinthian Plan, a mutual aid program designed to provide health-care access for Mennonite Church USA ministers, emerged out of a resolution passed by the Delegate Assembly in San José, Calif, in 2007. The resolution called on the Executive Board to implement a plan to provide basic health insurance for all eligible pastors. At Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009, many delegates and participants had questions about the plan. Keith Harder, Executive Leadership staff person spearheading the campaign, reported these new questions and provided the following answers.

What is The Corinthian Plan?

It is a new health-cost-sharing program for pastors and employees of Mennonite Church USA congregations and churchwide agencies. It will provide health coverage, long-term disability coverage, life coverage and other optional benefits such as vision and dental coverage. It is a program that allows all MC USA congregations to practice mutual aid by sharing in the cost of health care for all pastors and church workers.

What if our pastor is covered by his or her spouse's health insurance plan?

A pastor or employee who is currently covered by a creditable health plan other than individual insurance can retain that coverage, and the congregation can still participate in The Corinthian Plan. In such a case the pastor or employee will be considered validly "waived" from participating.

For each full-time credentialed pastor who is validly waived, the congregation will be asked to contribute $2,300 annually to the mutual aid component of The Corinthian Plan.

This will guarantee that in the future the congregation's pastor will be able to enroll without any restrictions based on pre-existing health conditions.

How will you determine who is eligible for a subsidy to help pay for health coverage and how much subsidy will be available?

Congregations will apply for a Corinthian Plan fair balance subsidy. Subsidy guidelines have been developed that will be used in determining how much each congregation can pay and how much subsidy is needed.

Every congregation receiving a subsidy will pay something toward the cost of providing health coverage for their pastor.

What is the deadline to enroll our pastor and other church employees in The Corinthian Plan?

The deadline is Oct. 1 in order to determine if there is sufficient participation for the plan to go into effect as scheduled on Jan. 1, 2010.

How will pastors with limited income cope with a $6,000 family deductible?

Plan participants with family coverage will be responsible for the first $6,000 per year of health-care expenses, except for certain preventive services. Beyond $6,000 the plan will pay 100 percent of eligible in-network claims so that in any given year medical cost liability should not exceed $6,000 (including prescription costs).

Why is the church doing this? Why don't we contract with another insurance broker to develop and administer a plan for pastors and church employees?

Preliminary research indicated that few commercial carriers would be willing or able to manage a plan involving many small, separate and independent employers (congregations), each with only one or a few employees. Also, since the plan is a self-funded church plan, Mennonite Church USA has the latitude to set rates and make eligibility decisions.

May our congregation put money that will be assessed for the Fair Equity Fund into our mission budget?

Some congregations are finding it helpful to see their contribution to the Fair Equity Fund as a contribution to mission and are putting it into that part of their budget. This money will be used to support other pastors and congregations that are engaged in ministry in areas that are often economically depressed.

What impact will possible national health-care reform have on The Corinthian Plan?

It's hard to know what will happen on the national scene. Knowledgeable people are carefully monitoring what is happening in Washington to help us assess the impact of possible policy changes on The Corinthian Plan. We are committed to making future adjustments to the plan, if needed, as things become clear at the federal level.

For more information, contact your Corinthian Plan ambassador, www.corinthianplan.com, or email Keith Harder at keithh@mennoniteusa.org or 866-866-2872 or 620-382-7135.—*Mennonite Church USA*

See all questions and answers on www.themennonite.org.

Service trumps convenience in Alaska

Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers will take cold showers, sleep in tents.

Photo provided

Mennonite Disaster Service leaders Wilbur Litwiller (left), Jerry Klassen and Mary Litwiller assess the damage in Eagle, Alaska.

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) projects are known by volunteers for their hospitality, good food and great accommodations. However, this time is different.

Long working hours, unpredictable weather, sleeping with a group of 20 under a tent, cold showers, washing clothes by hand, no cell phone service, limited electricity, no email or Internet service and a willingness to eat anything placed before you are what a group of skilled MDS volunteers agreed to in order to help members of a Native American community in Eagle, Alaska, return to their homes.

"It is exciting to see how flexible and service-minded people are when we ask for assistance on such a unique project," says Cathie Kearsley, MDS director of human resources.

During April and May, Alaska experienced a series of natural disasters in which a large ice jam gave way on Alaska's Yukon River, sending massive ice chunks into many of the Native American settlements of Eagle Village.

Bill McCoy, MDS region IV director, who recently visited Eagle from Portland, Ore., described what he saw: "Homes had been pushed as far as a half mile from their original positions, bunching them together up against trees."

McCoy, who was one of the first MDS leaders to arrive in Eagle, developed a productive and cooperative relationship with the tribal chief, Joyce Roberts. He said that Roberts' goal is to build "updated homes and not to settle for anything less."

MDS has committed experienced volunteers from Canada and the United States who are willing to serve at least two weeks. Groups of 15, rotating every two weeks, will be flying to Eagle until Sept. 12, the date of completion. The goal is to build 10 log homes within a nine-week period.

The phones have been exceptionally busy at MDS. "In five business days, nearly 75 volunteers have been recruited, and more than 200 phone calls came into the office expressing interest," said Kevin King, MDS executive director.

Time is important for Eagle residents and MDS volunteers. There are only three months of summer, during which all their supplies for the winter must be gathered.

Winter typically begins in September. If homeowners spend the three summer months building their homes, they will have no food for winter. The time to build is between July and September, and if not completed then, they will need to wait another year to rebuild.

MDS volunteers typically work eight-hour days, five days a week. However, this time they are committed to working 10- to 12-hour days, six days a week in order to meet demanding time constraints.

MDS is not alone in this project, however. Volunteers are working with Samaritans Purse and various agencies. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) has also agreed to pay the travel costs for volunteers in the recovery effort, since it can be expensive flying so many volunteers to Eagle, six people to a plane.

Volunteers learned an interesting fact about the Native American community. Andy Bassich, member of the Eagle Rebuilding and Construction Team (ERCT), explained to volunteers that most people living in Eagle choose a subsistence lifestyle by choice.

"They choose to hunt, fish, pick berries, cut wood, dry fish, can and freeze meat and train their dogs to be their transportation in the winter."

Rev. Michael Oleska says, "Without subsistence [living], Alaska native people will die spiritually, emotionally and will eventually die physically."

Scott Sundberg, MDS director of communications, says, "Perhaps what is most surprising is that we have far more people wanting to volunteer than we could ever place, even though this project is expected to be one where volunteers will rough it, maybe in tents without running water. Volunteers committed to being the hands and feet of Jesus understand that service is more important than convenience."

In addition to the Eagle project, MDS continues to work this summer on other projects in California and the Gulf area.—*Brian Pipkin of Mennonite Disaster Service*

Forgiveness essential ingredient for peace

Mission worker Linda Oyer speaks to charismatic Catholic order in France.

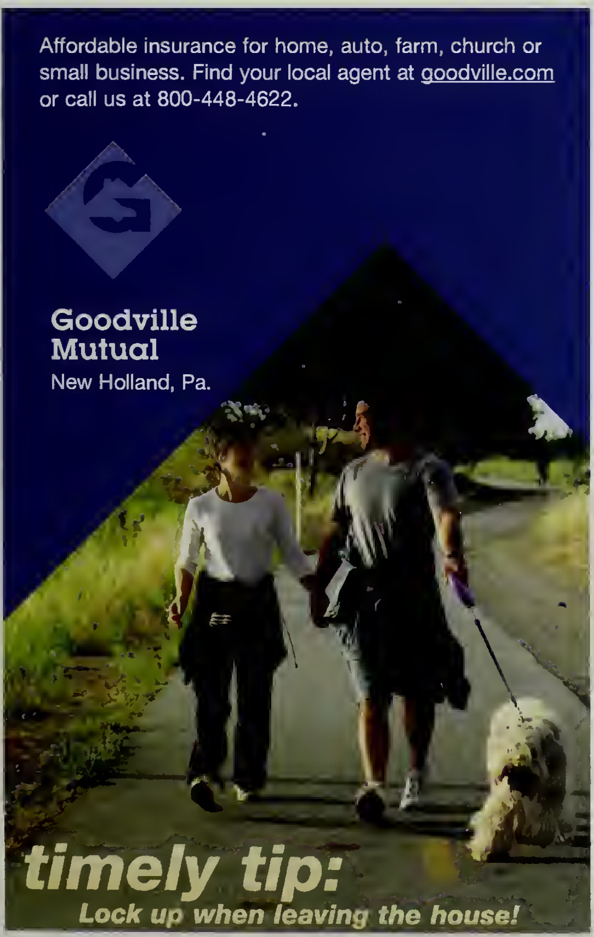
Why are Mennonites a people of peace? A group of curious Catholics and others got an answer to that question from Linda Oyer, a long-term worker with Mennonite Mission Network in France.

And Oyer also heard a response—that her message of forgiveness needs to spread.

Oyer, a professor and staff member at the Paris Mennonite Center, spoke about Mennonites' history of peace and nonviolence at a gathering June 13 of Chemin Neuf (New Way), a charismatic Catholic order in France. The theme of the conference was "Evangelical Nonviolence and Conflicts in the Workplace."

Oyer was invited to speak because of her past work, including an article she wrote on forgiveness, and because she is a member of a historic peace church.

"They wanted a Mennonite to come because of our history," Oyer said. "Being Catholic, Reformed or Lutheran, it was intriguing to them that there was a group of Christians that came into being at the same time as they did yet chose a way of nonviolence. They said, 'We need to hear your voice.'"



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timely tip:
Lock up when leaving the house!

Linda Oyer, with Mennonite Mission Network in Paris, speaks at a women's leadership conference.

Chemin Neuf grew out of the Catholic renewal movement that swept Europe in the 1970s. The group consists of a majority of Catholics, along with Lutherans and members of the Reformed church.

While some live together in community, others are simply members of the order and participate in conferences like the one at which Oyer spoke.

The group includes men, women and couples and has a history of working for peace among various groups.

Rather than trying to explain the entire history of nonviolence within the Mennonite church, Oyer focused on forgiveness as one of the essential ingredients of a nonviolent ethic.

To do this, she highlighted three reasons Mennonites have chosen to focus on forgiveness: God's love for us, Christ's example and the nature of the church as a sign of the kingdom of God.

Oyer explained that forgiveness is a way we can reveal Christ's coming kingdom right here and now.

"Forgiveness is an eschatological act," said Oyer. "It's a sign that the kingdom that is not yet is already present. It's a way to live now what will one day be."

Oyer also cited Scripture and told the story of Dirk Willems, a story she said touched the group.

"I explained that martyr stories [within the Mennonite tradition] aren't told to provoke violence," Oyer said. Instead, she said, the stories teach about what acts of forgiveness and nonviolence look like.

As she returned to her seat after speaking, one of the women in the crowd leaned over and told her, "You Mennonites have a prophetic voice in the world today."—*Melanie Hess of Mennonite Mission Network*

Forgiveness a sign that the kingdom that is not yet is already present.
—Linda Oyer

MPN sells 34,000 pamphlets in its series

Donors also give $10,000 to give away Jesus Matters: Good News *book.*

CLOSE TO HOME
DEALING WITH
gambling

CLOSE TO HOME
DEALING WITH
overwhelming
debt

With almost 34,000 copies sold to 360 churches in Canada and the United States, the Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN) "Close to Home" pamphlets about dealing with personal issues and problems are proving their usefulness.

"It's gratifying to see the response," says editor Byron Rempel-Burkholder. The series deals with personal problems that often remain hidden and undealt with—things like pornography, bullying, gambling, child abuse, debt, depression, drug abuse, eating disorders and other issues.

"It shows there is a need for information about issues that are hard to talk about," he adds.

Pastors who are using the materials agree. "We found them to be sensitively written, balanced and a good starting place for seeking further help," says Tim Reimer, pastor of Danforth Mennonite Church in Toronto. "Two or three of the titles seemed to vanish rather quickly."

Terry Shue, pastor of Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church, says that in addition to using the pamphlets at the church, they are also given away at a booth operated by local pastors at the Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale.

"We found that they really touched what people were looking for," Shue says. "Most all of them were taken by people who were in conversations with pastors at the booth."

For Shue, the popularity of the pamphlets shows that people are more interested in a faith that connects with issues they are dealing with in their real lives.

"The 'Close to Home' series does a good job of bringing our theological perspective into the issues of modern life with a pastoral touch," Shue says.

At First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, Alberta, the pamphlets are used both as a ministry to members and "as a form of outreach," says pastor Donita Wiebe-Neufeld.

The pamphlets are "one way we try to acknowledge our brokenness and encourage healing," she says, noting that the church plans to install racks in washrooms "so people can pick up pamphlets on sensitive topics without worry of being noticed."

"The pamphlets are coming from a theological perspective that feels right to us," she says. "This ministry is compassionate and encouraging and hopeful, and it's good to see the Mennonite name on it."

"Close to Home" can be ordered at www.mpn.net/closetohome.

Also, thanks to contributions from generous donors, more than 1,000 copies of *Jesus Matters: Good News for the 21st Century*, a new book from MPN, have been given to pastors of Mennonite Church USA congregations.

About $10,000 was donated by a group of individuals to give away the book, which explores why Jesus still matters for young adults today.

The money was raised by the books co-editors, David Shenk and James Krabill. "We just mentioned the idea to a few people, and the funds came in," says Shenk. "It was a touching and humbling experience."

About $1,000 of that amount was personally donated by Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference bishops.

"They dug into their own pockets to make it available to their pastors," says Shenk.

The donated funds were also used to give copies to all members of the Mennonite World Conference Global Missions Council, as well as the Mennonite World Conference Executive Council. In addition to the donations, Mennonite Mission Network bought copies for 450 youth leaders at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Columbus, Ohio, and Eastern Mennonite Missions bought 100 copies for missionaries and church planters.

The mailing to pastors was accompanied by a letter from Ron Byler, acting executive director of Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership.

Jesus Matters "is filled with important stuff for people who take Jesus seriously," says Byler, adding that it "can be a valuable resource for small groups, Sunday school classes, youth and young adult groups, new believers' classes, leadership training and more."

Jesus Matters consists of 16 chapters on topics such as Jesus and creation, Jesus and the cross, Jesus and salvation, Jesus and mission, and Jesus and the future. Each chapter is a collaborative effort between authors such as Shenk, Krabill, Stanley Green, Michele Hershberger, Mark Thiessen Nation, Willard Swartley, Jack Suderman, April Yamasaki and others, along with young adults in Canada and the United States.

"There are gale force winds blowing in our culture that challenge our commitment to Christ," says Shenk. "The goal of this book is to show that Jesus continues to be relevant and surprising good news today."

Jesus Matters is available from www.mpn.net/jesusmatters.—*John Longhurst of Mennonite Publishing Network*

The pamphlets are coming from a theological perspective that feels right to us.
—Donita Wiebe-Neufeld

EMU offers research in Cambodia, Hawaii

Eastern Mennonite University students work with professors on campus as well.

Several students of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., worked closely with professors in research on campus and overseas.

Jakob zumFelde, Christine (Chrissy) Kreider and Gene Fifer teamed up with three students from Buffalo (N.Y.) State College to work on projects related to water sanitation in Cambodia.

Doug S. Graber Neufeld, professor of biology at EMU, gave oversight to the group. The students worked with Thai and Cambodian colleagues on projects related to water sanitation.

ZumFelde and one Buffalo student worked at the Asian Institute of Technology on what happens to sewage in a local community when the sewage and accompanying rain water runs into open canals and then into a local lake.

Kreider worked at a nongovernmental organization outside Phnom Penh, Research Development International, doing survey work and testing drinking water in rural villages of Cambodia. She looked at the impact of drinking water education, following up on work that 2009 graduate Laura Cattell did there last year.

Fifer did village survey work with RDI on the feasibility of implementing composting toilets to deal with human waste.

EMU students Elisa J. Troyer, Nathan Derstine and David N. Showalter worked with Matthew Siderhurst, associate professor of chemistry, on the Big Island of Hawaii. The project, funded by a grant from the Hawaii Invasive Species Council, focused on ways to control the little fire ant in Hawaii through identification and applications of their alarm pheromone(s).

Photo provided

Chrissy Kreider prepares to test drinking water in a Cambodian village.

Back on campus, Stephen Cessna, associate professor of chemistry, worked with two students on a project with the Shenandoah Valley partnership for research experiences of undergraduates in molecular biology.

Andrew (Drew) Kirk measured antioxidants in tomatoes grown in different conditions. Jie Ren, a student at J. Sargent Reynolds Community College who is considering transferring to EMU, measured free fatty acids in the same tomato plants.

This research is being supported by the National Science Foundation through a partnership with James Madison University and Bridgewater College and by the U.S. Department of Agriculture through a grant that Cessna received for his sabbatical work.—*Jim Bishop of Eastern Mennonite University*

Simon von Kyrene hilft Jesus das Kreuz tragen (Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross), Sieger Köder

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CALENDAR

The Mennonite Children's Choir of Lancaster (MCCL), Lancaster Mennonite High School's Campus Chorale, and Lancaster Mennonite's middle school choir will join with a quartet of local chamber musicians called "Beyond Ourselves" to present ***their third annual benefit concert Sunday, March 15, 2010***, at Lancaster Mennonite's Fine Arts Center. The concert will benefit Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) relief work in Colombia. Last year the concert raised $6,000 for Sudan relief, and this year's planners are hoping to increase that to $10,000. For more information about the concert call 717-291-0514.

WORKERS

Headrick, Betsy McCrae, was ordained by Mountain States Mennonite Conference as a pastor at Glennon Heights Mennonite Church, Lakewood, Colo., on July 19.

Ivanitsky, Eric, was ordained as youth pastor at Western Mennonite Church, Salem, Ore., on July 26.

Martin, Eric, was licensed at Salem Mennonite Church, Salem, Ore., as chaplain for Mennonite Village on July 26.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Boldt, Joshua Salvador, Aug. 4, to Daniel and Dolores Perez Boldt, Fresno, Calif.

Boyd, Zachary Curtis, May 22, to Bill and Katie Friesen Boyd, Omaha, Neb.

Cooke, Vivienne Annali, May 7, to Teman and Susan Gascho Cooke, Atlanta, Ga.

Friedli, Braden Daniel, July 9, to D.J. and Sarene Friedli, Beaver Crossing, Neb.

Hickman, Laineigh Alyssa, born July 9, 2007, received for adoption on May 4 by Matthew and Debra Miller Hickman, Normal, Ill.

Maury, Kyle Douglas, Aug. 3, to Doug and Elizabeth Heatwole Maury, Newton, Kan.

Meyer, Adalyn M., June 9, to Ryan and Heather Pietz Meyer, Wayland, Iowa.

Miller, Ava Elizabeth, July 23, to Tom and Rebbeca Beachy Miller, Kalona, Iowa.

Miller, Ruby Jade, July 24, to Clint and Nicole Slaubaugh Miller, Parnell, Iowa.

Ngouen, Mayli Victoria, June 29, to Sylvain Ngouen and Lauren Pletcher, Middlebury, Ind.

Paul, Malachi Elric, June 29, to Keith and Megan Pletcher Paul, Middlebury, Ind.

Reeser, Chloe Elizabeth Wyse, Aug. 16, to Scott and Angie Wyse Reeser, Madison, Wisc.

Tice, Ezra Daniel, July 9, to Adam and Maria Longoria Tice, Hyattsville, Md.

Wenger, Ava Lëanna and Sahsia Noel (twins), July 14, to Dustin and Emelene Reist Wenger, Lititz, Pa.

MARRIAGES

Brown/Troyer: Andrew Brown, Wooster, Ohio, and Abby Troyer, Kidron, Ohio, May 16, at Kidron Mennonite Church.

DeNisco/Mackey: Claire DeNisco, Ada, Ohio, and John Mackey, Bluffton, Ohio, Aug. 8, at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Gehman/Hershberger: Danielle Gehman, Bechtelsville, Pa., and Benjamin Hershberger, Boyertown, Pa., Aug. 1, at Boyertown Mennonite Church.

Immel/Yoder: Elizabeth Immel, Green Bay, Wis., and Devin Yoder, Kalona, Iowa, Aug. 1, in Green Bay.

Kauffman/Vendrely: Bryan Kauffman, Goshen, Ind., and Ingrid Vendrely, New Paris, Ind., July 25, at Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Kohlhaas/Rissler: Abigail Kohlhaas, South Bend, Ind., and Matthew Rissler, Dubuque, Iowa, June 27, at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend.

Loucks/Roth: Micah Loucks, Hesston, Kan., and Lucy Roth, Bloomington, Ill., July 18, at Mennonite Church of Normal, Normal, Ill.

Martin/Sauder: Geneva Martin, Lancaster, Pa., and Kent Sauder, Reading, Pa., Aug. 1, in Kinzers, Pa.

Miller/Smucker: Linda Miller, Apple Creek, Ohio, and Matthew Smucker, Massillon, Ohio, May 23, at Kidron Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio.

Schlabach/Steiner: Ashley Schlabach, Hartville, Ohio, and Chris Steiner, Dalton, Ohio, Aug. 8, at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Hartville.

Stuckey/Weber: Emily Stuckey, Denver, Colo., and James Weber, Denver, Aug. 8, Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

DEATHS

Amstutz, Verda Gerber, 98, Dalton, Ohio, died July 18. Spouse: Noah D. Amstutz (deceased). Parents: Peter and Anna Hofstetter Gerber. Children: Wanda Hostetler, Laurie Kratzer, Robert, Brian; nine grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 22 at Kidron Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio.

Bartel, Henry, 84, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 11. Spouse: Violet Friend Bartel. Parents: David and Wanda Kuehn Bartel. Child: Rosemary Fetterman; three grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 15 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

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SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA and ITS FJORDS (June 13-28)
PENNSYLVANIA to EUROPE (June 19 - July 2)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE (June 24 - July 5)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE II with JOHN SHARP (June 29 - July 12)
ITALY, AUSTRIA and GERMANY (July 7-17)
ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (July 23 - August 4)
SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29 - August 11)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE III with PAUL ZEHR (September 5-18)
THE ROAD to JERUSALEM (September 11-22)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE IV (September 16-29)

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ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (September 6-18)
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Cashwiler, Anna M. Martin Sweigart, 95, Lititz, Pa., died Aug. 2. Spouse: Thomas L. Cashwiler (deceased). Spouse: Amos O. Sweigart (deceased). Parents: Phares and Lizzie A. Martin. Step-children: Thomas L. Cashwiler, Jr., Edith Zook. Funeral: Aug. 6 at Groff-High Funeral Home, New Holland, Pa.

Copsey, Joan Carole Gyllstrom, 77, Goshen, Ind., died July 8. Spouse: James Copsey. Parents: Eric and Helga Gyllstrom. Child: Lori Copsey; one granddaughter. Funeral: July 15 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Diener, Clayton H., 90, Hesston, Kan., died June 4. Spouse: Inez Snyder Diener. Parents: Harry and Amanda Diener. Children: Don, Dwight, Dennis. Funeral: June 8 at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston.

Franz, Phyllis Tucker, 79, Moses Lake, Wash., died July 28 of cancer. Spouse: Victor Franz. Parents: Gilbert and Martine Pels Tucker. Children: Randy, Curt, Pam Bowman; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 8 at Menno Mennonite Church, Ritzville, Wash.

Gingerich, Rollin J., 94, Kalona, Iowa, died July 13. Spouse: Kathryn Kauffman Gingerich (deceased). Parents: Charles and Nettie Miller Gingerich. Children: Faye Brenneman, Warren, Lois Beck, Orval, Karen Gingerich; 11 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 8 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Groff, Anna Detweiler Moyer, 84, Souderton, Pa., died Aug.7. Spouse: Claude Godshall Groff (deceased). Parents: Jacob M. Ida Detweiler Moyer. Parents: Rod, Gwen, Sandi Hurt, Lisa Weaver, Bill; 12 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 12 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

Hirschy, J. Duwaine, 80, Wayland, Iowa, died June 7 of cancer. Spouse: Bonnie Elder Hirschy. Parents: Joseph and Lydia Wagler Hirschy. Children: Dr. Larry D., Faye Schultz, Kaye Johnson, Rev. Loren; 10 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 9 at Wayland Mennonite Church.

Kaufman, Geneva Stucky, 88, McPherson, Kan., died Aug. 3. Spouse: A.K. Kaufman (deceased). Parents: Chris L. and Martha Graber Stucky. Children: Joleen Pauls, Randall, Mary Ellwood; seven grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 6 at First Mennonite Church, McPherson.

Leatherman, Alma Moyer, 91, Hatfield, Pa., died Aug. 4 of dementia. Spouse: Willard "Bill" D. Leatherman. Parents: Willard L. and Esther Clemens Moyer. Children: Janet Yoder, W. Ray, Darlene Brandis; five grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 7 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield.

Martin, Ira Eber, 91, Columbiana, Ohio, died July 28. Spouse: Martha Weaver Martin. Parents: William and Anna Lehman Martin. Children: Naomi "Molly" Hostetler, Lucille Clark, Charlotte Beck, Kathy Schroedel, Carol Moser, Lowell, Ronald, Lawrence; 16 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 2 at Midway Mennonite Church, Columbiana.

Meyer, Janie Konecki, 64, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, died July 3. Spouse: LeRoy Meyer (deceased). Parents: Joseph Konecki and Wanda Smiddy Konecki Brackey. Children: Steve, Beth Vander Molen, Tim; four grandchildren; three step-grandchildren. Funeral: July 8 at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa.

Nafziger, E. Lloyd, 78, Hopedale, Ill., died Aug. 6. Spouse: Eunice Yoder Nafziger. Parents: Orrin and Beatrice Slabaugh Nafziger. Children: Rodney, Kent, John, Marla Walker, Gail King; six grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 11 at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

Roes, Anna Mae, 73, Beaver Falls, N.Y., died Aug. 9. Spouse: Raymond D. Roes. Parents: John S. and Elizabeth Roggie Widrick. Children: Kevin, Sandra Oblick, Merle, Donald, Sharon Lehman; 11 grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 12 at Lowville Mennonite Church, Lowville, N.Y.

Roth, Delmer Darrell, 88, Milford, Neb., died Aug. 7. Spouse: Violet Stutzman Roth (deceased). Parents: Ed and Emma Yeackley Roth. Children: Yvonne Bontrager, Lenore Meyer, Russell, Cecil; 10 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 9 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

Yoder, Esther Mable Baer, 78, Newport News, Va., died June 27. Spouse: John David Yoder. Parents: Jacob and Esther Mable Hahn Baer. Children: Christine S. Yoder, John Alan, Mark Edward; two grandchildren. Funeral: June 30 at Huntington Mennonite Church, Newport News.

Zook, Mary Ruth Branz, 81, Goshen, Ind., died July 14. Spouse: John "Wes" Wesley Zook. Parents: Ben and Orpha Erwin Branz. Children: Linda Zook, Brenda Zook, Becci Velasco, John, Robert; nine grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: July 19 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Zuercher, Clayton A., 74, Orrville, Ohio, died July 28 from injuries sustained in a lawn mower accident. Spouse: Doris M. Gray Lehman Zuercher. Spouse: Alice Miller Zuercher (deceased). Parents: Isaac and Emma Lehman Zuercher. Children: Darrel Zuercher, Rita Richard, Stan Gray, Robin McCullough; 10 grandchildren; three step-grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; two step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 2 at Kidron Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio.

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Mennonite Mutual Aid (MMA) has an opportunity for a part-time medical director responsible to provide medical expertise in development/administration of insurance products, participate in underwriting decisions, determine medical necessity, and serve as spokesperson for MMA on medical matters. Qualified applicants will have a current, unrestricted state medical license to practice medicine, broad medical experience, and board certified in a clinical area. Experience with review of medical cases for necessity and quality of care is desirable.

MMA is an established, highly trusted, Anabaptist stewardship organization that helps people integrate their faith with their finances. We are an equal opportunity employer offering competitive wages and benefits. For more information about this position, visit our Web site, www.mma-online. org. Send cover letter and resume to:

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Eastern Mennonite University, located in Virginia's scenic Shenandoah Valley, seeks qualified candidates for the position of ***vice president for finance***. The vice president for finance serves as chief financial officer of the university. The vice president for finance is responsible for the development and final preparation of the annual operating and capital budgets, assures financial compliance, establishes internal control policies and procedures, provides strategic information concerning finances, represents the institution in external business transactions. The vice president for finance oversees and is responsible for the business, human resources, physical plant, financial assistance and auxiliary services departments. Qualifications include master's degree and/or CPA strongly preferred; minimum of six years of experience in financial administration; skills/experience related to financial management, budget development, personnel management and planning desired; knowledge of the Mennonite church with a commitment to the mission of Mennonite/Anabaptist higher education. Position begins on or around Jan. 1, 2010. To apply send a letter of application and resumé to Fred L. Kniss, Provost, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802; email fred.kniss@emu.edu. For more information, visit our Web site: www.emu.edu/humanresources.

Spruce Lake Wilderness Camp, a dynamic, innovative youth camp ministry (under the umbrella of Spruce Lake Retreat) is seeking a ***full-time Wilderness Camp director***, effective immediately. The director is responsible for developing and implementing annual youth camps, supervising full-time, part-time and seasonal summer staff within a team environment, reviewing all summer camp schedules and activities for a balanced blend of spiritual enrichment, social interaction, environmental awareness and recreational stimulation. This role also involves some travel to promote Wilderness Camp. The director is a Leadership Team member on the Retreat Center staff and reports to the executive director. The preferred person will have a bachelor's degree or equivalent life experience, 3-5 years of youth camp experience and demonstrated visionary leadership skills, is energized by interacting with people and relates well with teens, children and parents, and has lived within and owns the Anabaptist faith tradition. This person will also have basic computer skills with knowledge of MS Word, Excel, Powerpoint and Outlook. Outstanding oral skills (including public speaking), strong written communication skills, a high level of self-motivation and organizational skills are a must. Salary and liberal benefits package provided. On-site housing may be available. Full job description posted online at www.sprucelake.org. Applications accepted through Sept. 15, 2009. Send resumé to Mark Swartley, Executive Director, Spruce Lake Retreat, RR 1, Box 605, Canadensis, PA 18325; phone: 800-822-7505 x118; fax: 570-595-0328; email: jobs915@sprucelake.org

Hesston College seeks a ***director of the pastoral ministries program***. The ideal candidate will excel in spiritual formation, administration, teaching and recruitment. The candidate will have an understanding of and commitment to the Mennonite Confession of Faith, the larger Mennonite church, and Anabaptist theology and practice. Pastoral ministry experience and master's degree required; seminary or doctorate in theological studies preferred. Application materials: Send an employment application, Curriculum Vitae, Ministerial Leadership Information form, official transcript(s), list of references and application essays to: Sandra Zerger, Vice President for Academics, Box 3000, Hesston, KS 67062, or send to sandraz@hesston.edu. Start date: spring term 2010. Review of applications begins Sept. 1 and continues until the position is filled. Additional information available at www.hesston.edu/employment. EOE

EMU seeks qualified applicants for a ***full-time director of seminary admissions***. The position is responsible for seminary admission and recruitment activities. Master's degree preferred. Must have good communication skills, be a creative thinker and facilitate student service functions. The position calls for office time as well as regular times of travel. Must be a committed Christian in accordance with the EMU Statement of Commitment as well as the EMU philosophy and purpose. Prior experience in administration, public relations, admissions and recruitment, and/or ministry-related experience is required. Position begins no later than July 2010. Submit application, resumé and three references to: hr@emu.edu. For more information visit our Web site at www.emu.edu/humanresources. People who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Durham Mennonite Church, Durham, N.C., celebrates its ***40th anniversary*** on Saturday, Oct. 24, 1:30-5:30 p.m., and Sunday, Oct. 25, at the 10:30 a.m. worship service. For more information contact pastor@dur-hammennonite.org or Marcia Nice at 919-596-9459. For updates see www.durhammennonite.org.

Shalom Christian Academy is currently seeking applicants for ***administrator***, an executive position at a 500-pupil PreK-Grade 12 day school in South Central Pennsylvania. A Doctorate of Education is preferred. A master's degree with administrative experience is required. A history of lifelong learning and Christian service is valued. This visionary person will lead an administrative team as they continue to move our school in fulfilling our stated mission to "prepare and release each student for a life of consequence for the kingdom of God." Shalom is a parent-owned and board-governed multidenominational Anabaptist school. Qualified individuals may submit confidential resumés to the search committee secretary at www.shalomca.info.

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Coming to Montreal for school or vacation? Enjoy Montreal's trendy "Plateau" district by staying at ***Maison de l'amitié Summer Guestrooms and Student residence***. Student housing available for September. 514-843-4356, www.residencema.ca; reservations@maisondelamitie.ca.

JustHelp, Inc., seeks ***Spanish-proficient public interest attorney*** for new nonprofit. Experience in bankruptcy, landlord tenant or immigration ideal. Inquire at info.justhelp@gmail.com.

JustHelp, Inc., seeks ***executive director*** for new nonprofit. Spanish a plus. All interested candidates encouraged to inquire at info.justhelp@gmail.com.

RESOURCES

The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus by Dale C. Allison Jr. (Eerdmans, 2009, $16) addresses ongoing historical-theological questions concerning Jesus Christ. What should one think of the modern quest for the historical Jesus when there is such enduring discord among the experts and when personal agendas play such a large role in the reconstructions?

Rooted in Jesus Christ: Toward a Radical Ecclesiology by Daniel Izuzquiza (Eerdmans, 2009, $35) analyzes the language of theology, the role of social sciences, the transformation of culture and the church's approach to politics.

Called to Be Human: Letters to My Children on Living a Christian Life by Michael Jinkins (Eerdmans, 2009, $15) explores the so-called Big Questions that challenge people of all ages: What is it to be human? Why am I here? What can I believe in? How should I invest my life?

Out of My Bone: The Letters of Joy Davidman, edited by Don W. King (Eerdmans, 2009, $28), tells the life story of Davidman, best known as the wife of C.S. Lewis but an accomplished writer in her own right, through her numerous letters and her autobiographical essay "The Longest Way Round."

Performing the Sacred: Theology and Theatre in Dialogue by Todd E. Johnson and Dale Savidge (BakerAcademic, 2009, $17.99) is the first book-length exploration of the intersection of theatre and theology, illuminating the importance of preserving live performance in a virtual world.

Encounters With God: In Quest of the Ancient Icons of Mary by Sister Wendy Beckett (Orbis, 2009, $22) traces Beckett's travels from England to Rome, Ukraine and a remote monastery in Sinai to view and reflect on the earliest icons of Mary, among the few that survived the wholesale destruction of icons in the early eighth century.

Nightwatch: An Inquiry Into Solitude by Robert Rhodes (Good Books, 2009, $9.95) recounts the forces that took the author, his wife and young daughter to live among the Hutterian Brethren from 1995 to 2002. Rhodes explores what drew him and his family to the community and held him there —and why they eventually decided to leave.

Downstairs the Queen Is Knitting by Dorcas Smucker (Good Books, 2009, $9.95) offers in her third book more anecdotes from her rollicking family life with six kids on a grass-seed farm in Oregon's Willamette Valley.

Christian America and the Kingdom of God by Richard T. Hughes (University of Illinois Press, 2009, $29.95) investigates why so many Americans think of the United States as a Christian nation despite the Constitution's outright prohibition against establishing any national religion by law or coercion. He points to a systemic biblical and theological illiteracy running rampant in the United States.

What Is Iran? A Primer on Culture, Politics and Religion by Laurie Blanton Pierce (Herald Press, 2009, $12.99) offers an overview of the historical, religious and political landscape of modern Iran. It is written from a peacebuilding perspective and informed by almost 20 years of Mennonite experience in Iran.

For the Beauty of the Earth: Women, Faith and Creation Care by Patty Friesen (Herald Press, 2009, $8.99) examines our relationship with God's creation and suggests practical ways to care for it, nurturing our faith and nurturing others.

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At my mother's knee

Sara Wenger Shenk is an author and serves as associate dean and associate professor of Christian practices at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.

At this back-to-school time of year I'm reminded of how the most important lessons I learn in life are from my mother. Though I'm 56, and my mother is 86, she is still my best and far and away most likable teacher.

As we've watched mother age, she's said over and over, "Life just keeps getting better." We children and grandchildren look at each other in disbelief, thinking, She can't be serious.

But she is serious. It's abundantly manifest that Mother has learned the secret to a happy life. And for her, happiness isn't merely the product of the good gifts that have come her way. She has actively cultivated practices that sustain her through enormous challenges.

A year ago, Mother suffered a stroke. While contending with debilitating weakness, Mother's feisty spirit kicked in. As I reflect on the lessons I've learned from my mother, the practices that sustained her in earlier years have become even more marked during her year long fight to regain mobility.

Caring for bodies. After years of bathing, clothing and feeding her eight children, canning shelves of peaches, pears, grape and tomato juice, and freezing carloads of corn, beans, applesauce and cider, Mother stays active. In her 70s and 80s, she worked out regularly at Curves, a women's fitness club. After the stroke has left her unable to sit up on her own, Mother now does hours of daily exercise, managing to regain enough mobility to get around with a walker. And by leaning on the counter with one arm, she prepares entire meals with the other, continuing to feed family and friends with delicious, homegrown produce.

Bible immersion. Mother loves to read the Bible. For many years, she has used a study version of the New International Version, reading the New Testament so often that her favorite Bible is falling apart. She refers to the study helps when she is perplexed by a passage. She frequently quotes texts or tells a Bible story when making an observation about life in her conversation with others. She says she reads the Bible not so much for information as a heart-to-heart encounter with God; it feeds her soul. She quotes Jesus saying, "You are made clean by the word I have spoken to you."

Simplicity—more with less. There are no collector's items or expensive furniture in evidence in Mother's home. The walls are filled with memorabilia that tell the story of a life well lived rather than wealth displayed. The irony is that while there is no evidence of a lavish lifestyle, Mother has lavished love on countless people coming through her doors. Her home is constantly bustling, rich with stories, beautiful flowers, shared meals and splendid conversations. And she and Dad give away most of what they earn.

Storytelling. I can sit enthralled for hours, hearing Mother recount memories from the past or fascinating glimpses into people's lives in the present. Mother is an amazingly attentive listener, asking good questions and drawing out the stories of people's lives in ways that we love to respond to, and then weeks and months later, she will still recall the detail as she continues to inquire after our well-being.

Daily prayer. From little up, I heard Mother and Dad's voices praying aloud in their bed as they prepared for sleep. During tough times, or in the midst of difficult transitions, Mother talks about drawing strength from prayer. She tells us all that she and Dad pray for us daily, continually bringing their children and grandchildren to God.

Reading good books. For many years, Mother has belonged to a women's book club. I've been impressed with their choices of what to read together: not sentimentalized piety but books with starch and cultural verve, cutting-edge books that aren't afraid to ask hard questions or crack open tidy assumptions.

Generosity of spirit. Warmth radiates from every pore of Mother's being. Her laughter and sparkle are contagious. Whether at market, at church or in her home, Mother makes connections. People love to be near her because she is so genuine. She manages to make it safe for people to be honest with their questions and in so doing draws people closer to Christ.

Gathering with God's people. Mother loves to go to church and has gone every week as long as I can remember, with a rare exception when the whole family is home for Christmas or she is ill. The relationships she has cultivated over the years have become for her a wonderful community of friends. She thrives in the company of people devoted to the work of God's kingdom.

Mother isn't perfect. In fact, I can hear her voice in my head as she reads this, declaring loudly that it's overdone. She's keenly aware of her failures. Her transparency about her own struggles only makes her more disarming. We know she's real. And that's what makes her so lovable and such an exemplary teacher. TM

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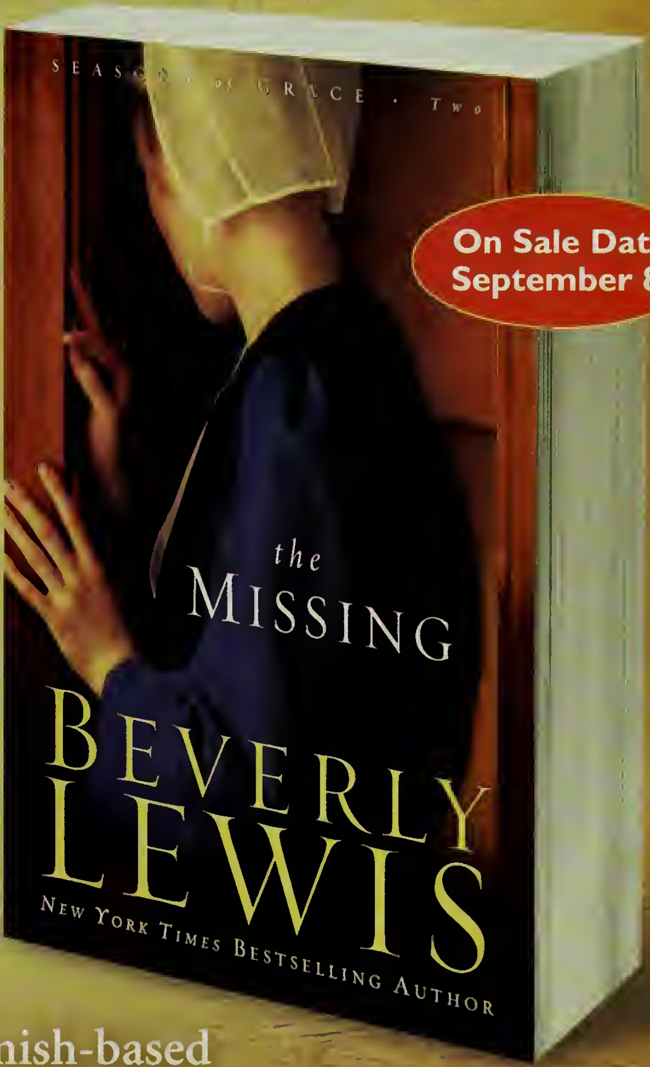
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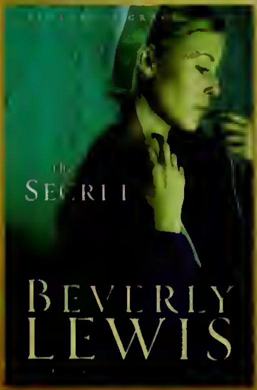
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Everett J. Thomas

What are we to say about health care?

The U.S. Congress returns to session next week and will take up health-care legislation. National attention to this legislation included an action by Mennonite Church USA delegates at Convention 2009. The delegates adopted a resolution calling us to ask our representatives "to support legislation that would extend access to health care to all Americans."

"Until we have specific legislation," says David Gautsche, MMA's senior vice president for products and services, "we won't know how it aligns with the delegate action."

On the other hand, Tim Jost (see page 18), who authored the resolution adopted by the delegates, insists now is the time for us to contact our representatives.

"Now is the time for people to get involved to help shape the legislation," Jost says. "We know what the basic legislation will look like."

There are some delicate cross currents to Mennonite Church USA's involvement in the national health-care access debate.

Jost says that Mennonite Church USA members should support the legislation currently in the House of Representatives because it would do what Mennonite Church USA statements on health-care access reform have requested. According to Jost, who has read the statute, the legislation would do five things:

- reform the insurance market,
- expand Medicaid so that all poor people are covered,
- subsidize premiums on a sliding scale for people whose income is less than 400 percent of the poverty level,
- require individuals to purchase health insurance, even if they are healthy,
- require large companies to provide health insurance.

It is uncomfortable and nearly unprecedented for Mennonites to get so involved in such a national policy discussion. In this case, there are also some delicate cross currents to our involvement. MMA's future is one of them.

"MMA is clearly aligning with the [delegate] resolution," Gautsche says, "and working with Mennonite Central Committee and the Mennonite Church USA peace and justice office. We don't know what the implications are for MMA, but … I'm convinced that there is some role to help our members navigate the health-care system."

Another voice in the Mennonite Church USA system is MHS Alliance, a denominational entity that provides leadership for 73 retirement communities and health-care providers.

"We do support the migration of health care in the direction of [it being a] 'right' rather than a 'retail commodity,' " says MHS Alliance president Rick Stiffney.

But Stiffney also notes that most of the nonprofit providers within MHS Alliance depend on state and federal reimbursement in the form of Medicaid and Medicare. This means that, like MMA, these institutions will be affected by changes to the health-care access system.

"We support health-care reform that expands access through a system in which risks, costs and responsibility are shared by all," says Stiffney. He notes that certain elements in the proposed legislation are especially important to MHS Alliance:

- provisions that cover dialogue about end-of-life care,
- expanded public assistance programs, such as Medicaid,
- initiatives that would ease pressure on providing health insurance for employees, so that employers are not forced to decrease benefits.

The proposed legislation seeks to reform the insurance industry; that will have significant ramifications for MMA, our church's health insurance provider. It also will require large companies to provide health insurance; this will affect many of the large entities served by MHS Alliance.

The delegates at Columbus 2009 passed their resolution overwhelmingly. That was the easy part. More difficult is understanding the potential effect on some of our important church institutions. Fortunately, representatives from these agencies have been talking to each other.

So that Mennonite Church USA members can be unified in our advocacy, we need these entities to find a consensus. Doing so will not only help people in the pew understand what is at stake, it will also strengthen our voice when we talk with our elected representatives.—*ejt*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

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September 15, 2009

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Blessed to be a pastor

Clarence Rempel was pastor of First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan., and now is associate conference minister for Western District Conference.

I am blessed to be a pastor. I say that after several months of intense reflection on my own pastoral vocation in preparation for bidding farewell to First Mennonite Church, Newton, Kansas, after 15 years. What is the significance of over 5,000 pastoral visits, 500 sermons, 223 funerals, 217 new members and three major future initiatives? My farewell Sunday was a day of remembering and celebrating God's graciousness in this assignment.

I am blessed with a good news message and abundant opportunities to proclaim it. God has come to us in Jesus Christ. We are not abandoned to hopeless loneliness, desperate addiction or crushing guilt. Satan threw at Jesus all the temptations of money, sex and power, and Jesus resisted and remained faithful to God. The oppressive religious, economic and political powers of Jesus' day conspired to get rid of this truth-speaker, body-healer, spirit-restorer. And they did. They murdered him on a cross, and it seemed the world was sinking into darkness. But God broke the power of evil and death and raised Jesus Christ to life. And if you believe that God raised him from the dead and confess that Jesus is now the living, ruling Lord of the universe, you will be saved (Romans 10:9). That's the good news message. I am blessed with that message as a pastor, and we are blessed with that good news as the body of Christ.

I am blessed to be a leader in the church. The social entity God created to bring this saving and redeeming message to Earth is the church. Ephesians 1 says, "Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence" (The Message).

God's saving message and Christ's effectual lordship comes through the church. Government can't save us from the darkness; education can't save us; medical care can't save us; the military can't save us. God's saving work comes through the church. What an incredible privilege to serve the church! What a privilege to embody the life-giving, soul-transforming message! What a privilege to be a pastor of good news people!

I am blessed to be at the center of God's redeeming, reconciling and restoring mission in the world. Lost people matter to God, and they ought to matter to us. The resurrected Lord Jesus gave us this mission assignment: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

People need to know this Jesus

- so they can have hope,
- so they can have purpose,
- so they can have an eternal future.

Bringing people to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ is always the leading edge of God's mission in the world. It is not all of God's mission, but God's mission is never less than inviting people to commit to and become followers of Jesus. As a pastor, I am often blessed to be the "doctor" in attendance at the miracle of spiritual birth.

Where else would I want to pour out my life? I am blessed with a good news message embodied by a good news people. I am blessed with a personal yet encompassing mission of participating in God's global reclamation project.

I salute all my companion pastors. And I thank First Mennonite for the privilege of serving there. Thanks for blessing me with your support, your love, your prayers and your lives. TM

TheMennonite

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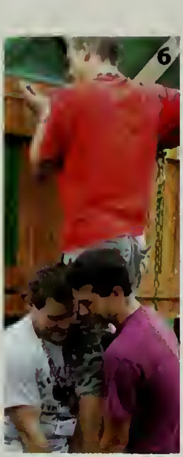

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Cover: Elsie Matz, a resident at Landis Homes, Lititz, Pa., reads to Braydon Martin, a student at Hinkletown Mennonite School. Photo is by Deb Laws-Landis.

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Why suggest a unilateral approach?

I am happy that Mennonite Church USA cares about health care, wants each of us to think about it and what each of us might do to shape its future. I am disappointed that Mennonite Church USA is suggesting that our individual churches allow themselves to be used as pawns in a political process to bring about changes to health care that include dollars for abortion (by judicial interpretation). I do not consider a plan that pays for abortion to be biblically compatible.

Surely the leadership of Mennonite Church USA knows this is an explosive and divisive issue within our churches. So why suggest this unilateral approach? We need health-care reform, not government takeover of health care.—*Don Oswald, Hopedale, Ill.*

Jesus would wonder why it took so long

I applaud the leadership of Mennonite Church USA in passing a resolution supportive of health-care access reform legislation. This is a life-and-death issue for the 46 million uninsured in the United States. It seems to me Jesus would wonder why it took us so long to do something about it. As people of faith, it is our moral responsibility to advocate for changing a broken system that gives everyone access to affordable, quality health care.—*Shari Gehman Nyles, Fleetwood, Pa.*

PinkMenno folks are us

As we continue our discussion of the PinkMenno campaign, it is important for us to keep in mind who we're talking about. The folks who make up PinkMenno are not outsiders, such as military recruiters, who can be told to go away. Instead, they are us. They are our young adults, some of the ones who—unlike many in their age group—have decided to stick with the denomination. They are active in their local congregations and have a deep love for the church. We may agree or disagree with what they are saying, but they can't be dismissed. They are part of our community, this body of Christ.—*Betsy Headrick McCrae, Lakewood, Colo.*

Editor's note: For background information on the PinkMenno campaign, see "Pink Mennos Launch Campaign," July 21.

Saddened by response to PinkMenno

As a young adult who has grown up in the Mennonite church—one that has always taught me inclusion and love—I am deeply saddened by the opposing responses given to the PinkMenno group. I have grown up attending conventions, including Atlanta 2003 with the theme "God's Table, Y'all Come."

To me, that signifies all are welcome at God's table. It seems to me that excluding people committing a certain sin (if we decide to call homosexuality a sin) from our church is an act of fear and an act of hatred. This greatly disappoints me, that the larger Mennonite church I have come from, which has continued to teach me to love all, is willing to show this exclusion and hatred toward a certain sector of our population.—*Analisa Gerig-Sickles, West Branch, Iowa*

If we have love for one another

In my Sunday school class in mid-July, we talked about the fruit of the Spirit. As I was thinking about where I see that fruit, I thought about the people who wore pink at Convention 2009. As I talked to them, worshiped and prayed with them—and comforted them after an abusive interaction—I observed how they overflowed with the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness.

Since the convention, I've heard and read a lot of negative comments and untrue rumors from people who do not agree with the PinkMennos. Jesus told us that others "will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

I'm wondering if our GLBT brothers and sisters are feeling the love Jesus is talking about? Are our youth and "the world" observing that love? I'm also wondering how our church would change if we would focus more on following this and all the other teachings of Jesus and less on identifying and magnifying our differences. At Convention 2009 I often felt an open, loving, accepting Spirit blowing among us. Let's not quench this Spirit.
—*Joyce Hostetler, Columbus, Ohio*

IN THIS ISSUE

Our 2009 readers' survey shows that 60 percent of those who read *The Mennonite* are over 65. This may explain why we received several unsolicited manuscripts that address the life and spiritual vitality of the elderly. Evan Oswald (page 8) describes what he has learned during his years in a retirement community. Tim Schultz (page 12) says, "Rather than retiring to a warm climate and waiting for the inevitable, older people are finding a new lease on life involving service to their churches and communities." We also publish three original news stories by assistant editor Anna Groff. These include a report of a new "green" initiative by the Mennonite Environmental Task Force (page 19) and a news feature of the Mennonite Artist Project (page 24).—*Editor*

Draw a circle that includes all
After reading the Aug. 18 issue and paying special attention to the letters to the editor, I must disagree with those who became exercised over PinkMennos—who, by the way, were earnest and well within their rights—but I will not excoriate anyone. Instead, as a fallible disciple of Christ, I choose to draw a new circle that draws in everyone, regardless of their varying positions.—*Jacob (J.B.) Shenk, Goshen, Ind.*

A failing denominational strategy
In the Aug. 18 issue, Mennonite Church USA seems to be saying through leader Jim Schrag that key strategies for managing denominational life include enforcing norms for what is acceptable or not acceptable at denominational assemblies and seeking to build unity by apologizing when the norms are perceived to be violated.

This saddens me. It seems to continue what appears to be a failing Mennonite Church USA strategy of deciding who is in/out of denominational life. See, for instance, at www.openlettertofmc.org an open letter from young adults in my own Franconia Conference. Do we simply want to say either to them, You over here are in—your views denominationally appreciated—but you over there are out?

I doubt Mennonite Church USA has much of a future unless, when dissension arises, we find space in our hearts and strategies to embrace all as part of one body, agreeing and disagreeing in love—as we theoretically promised to do but seem not to do when the going gets tough.—*Michael A. King, Telford, Pa.*

Don't overlook what we know is wrong
I have heard people say they are slow to speak out against homosexuality because they don't have everything figured out themselves. They are confused about the Bible being used in support of slavery, war, submission of women and not allowing remarriage. I don't have everything figured out myself but am very frustrated that people can point to other sins and say I don't have to change because other people have sins in their lives.

I agree that it is hard to know what to do in some situations, but that doesn't mean we overlook the sins we know are wrong. Would we be all right with people in Mennonite Church USA questioning that Jesus is the only way to heaven? What if people came to our next conference wearing black shirts, saying they believe there are other ways besides Jesus to get into heaven? Could we make a stand and say Jesus is the only way? Or would we say, I don't have all the answers to the Bible questions on slavery, remarriage, war and submission of women?

I hope just because we don't have the answers for everything we refuse to take a stand for anything. People will always push for more. If you give in to this truth, before long other people will question and try to get you to cave in on another truth.—*Kurt Litwiller, Hopedale, Ill.*

Disappointed by Bethel College board
This is to express my disappointment in the action of the Bethel College board regarding its president ("Bethel Board Ousts Bartel as President," Sept. 1). I have been disappointed in the past when I saw the board's actions lead to a parade of revolving-door presidencies, but I have never been as ashamed of my alma mater as I am now.

I have been with higher education my entire professional life and have been in administration for a quarter of a century serving the Indiana University system. In the process I have dealt with boards, have done my share of hiring and, at times, dismissing. While I don't know Mr. Bartel and know nothing of the issues involved with his presidency, I do know that, barring ethical breaches, you do not break a contract; you first take care of the issues and drastically reduce the impact on the persons involved. The board did not do this but instead took a sophomoric, non-Anabaptist approach.—*Erwin Boschmann, Indianapolis*

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

For myself or for my parents, Mennonite retirement communities are: (45 votes)

○ my first choice (40%)

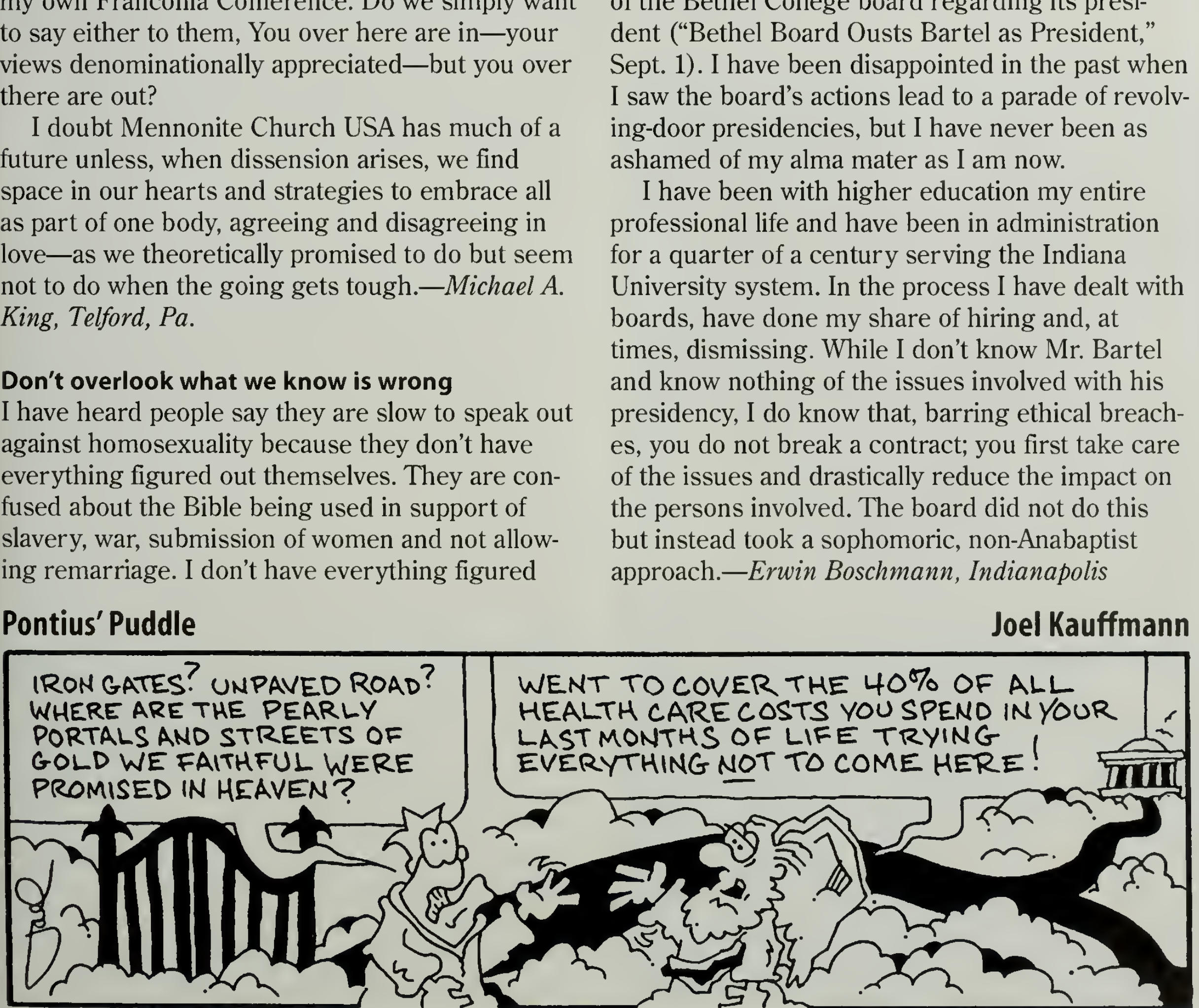
○ one of several options (40%)

○ not sure (11%)

○ my last resort (9%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


IRON GATES? UNPAVED ROAD? WHERE ARE THE PEARLY PORTALS AND STREETS OF GOLD WE FAITHFUL WERE PROMISED IN HEAVEN?
WENT TO COVER THE 40% OF ALL HEALTH CARE COSTS YOU SPEND IN YOUR LAST MONTHS OF LIFE TRYING EVERYTHING NOT TO COME HERE!

IN BRIEF

Ecclesial downsizing

Churches and synagogues have traditionally fared reasonably well during economic recessions, but the current downturn is having a different impact. Greater demands are being placed on churches by members who are economically stressed, and pastors have the challenge of explaining financial losses in spiritual terms. Cuts in giving compel congregations to cut their budgets, lay off staff and postpone capital projects. "Ten percent of zero is zero," says one unemployed layperson. "I can't tithe without a job."—*The Christian Century*

Park numbers

- Percentage of land protected worldwide as parks: 12.1
- Percentage of ocean designated as marine-protected areas: 0.7
- Percentage that species increase in marine-protected areas: 21

—*Yes!* Magazine

Correction to the photo caption on page 7, Aug. 18: the prayer vigil was held by Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Gainesville, Fla., at Dove World Outreach Center, where an anti-Muslim sign was posted.

The Corinthian Plan nears deadline

GOSHEN, Ind.—Participation in The Corinthian Plan continues to grow. So far, 178 congregations have made the commitment to participate; another 250 have indicated that they are likely to participate. This brought the total to 428 as of Sept. 4.

"There are 335 congregations that have not yet declared their intentions," says Keith Harder, project director. "We'd like to hear from them within the next couple of weeks. As many congregations as possible are needed to have a strong plan, and they need to make their intentions known by Oct. 1."

Harder said the goal is to have 80 percent of eligible congregations signed up by Oct. 1. Harder also said that applications are still being accepted for congregations needing assistance.

The Corinthian Plan is the Executive Board's response to a 2007 Delegate Assembly action calling for a mutual aid plan that provides health-care access for Mennonite Church USA ministers. The contributions of participating congregations will make it possible for pastors who are currently uninsured to have basic health coverage. For more information, contact Keith Harder at keithh@mennoniteusa.org.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Dave Linscheid

Bethel students, staff install donated playground

Max Wedel, left, and Graham Unruh make a living ladder for Michael Unruh as he secures a piece of playground equipment that Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., donated to a kindergarten in Columbus, Ohio, after Convention 2009 was held there in July. Youth participants at Convention 2009 put together the equipment.—*Bethel College*

Congregation commissions new moderator

NEWTON, Kan. and ELKHART, Ind.—The new moderator for Mennonite Church USA, Ed Diller of Fort Thomas, Ky., was commissioned in his home congregation, Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship, on Aug. 23. The congregation's pastor, Joel Miller, noted that all members are called by God to service in the reconciling work of Christ and included Diller's wife, Karen, in the commissioning.

On behalf of the congregation, council chair Linda Headings presented a quilted wall hanging to the Dillers.

"Your gift of listening without judgment, of recognizing our strengths and bringing people together despite their differences will serve you well as moderator," she told Diller.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Franconia Conference plans office relocation

SOUDERTON, Pa.—Franconia Mennonite Conference plans to relocate its offices from Souderton to Harleysville to further follow through on the Conference's Vision and Financial Plan. The conference will relocate to office space on Yoder Road in nearby Harleysville, adjacent to the Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania. The new office—most recently occupied by T.H. Properties—measures 3,200 square feet in usable space, a reduction of 5,800 square feet from the current location in the Souderton Center.

"We are confident," executive minister Noel Santiago says, "that this move will help us make the most of the properties we own [so as] to continue to release more dollars for ministry not only here locally but regionally and globally."

Meanwhile, conference-related ministry Care and Share Shoppes, which currently operates from the other end of the Souderton Center, will occupy the vacated space.—*Franconia Mennonite Conference*

Canadian Council of Churches sends letter

WINNIPEG, Man.—Christians in Canada are inviting fellow Christians in the United States to consider the Canadian health-care system as health-care advocacy that is "directly related to God's call to discipleship." A letter from the Canadian Council of Churches to sister bodies in the United States acknowledges that while the Canadian system is not perfect, it is an attempt to view health care as "a moral enterprise" and quotes from Matthew 25, "for I was sick and you took care of me."

The CCC letter is also copied to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Robert J. Suderman, General Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada—

uth with a Mission DVD project features AMBS prof

n Kreider, retired professor at Associated Mennonite
lical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., views a session from the
esident but Alien" DVD project with Andy Alexis-Baker,
BS graduate. In the DVD project, Kreider talks with Youth
th a Mission (YWAM) students about the early church and
w it was effective in inviting people to faith.—*AMBS*

whose denomination is a member of both CCC and EFC—says the letter also helps inform Canadian Christians. "It reminds us about who we are and what frame of reference is important to us as faithful believers," says Suderman.—*Mennonite Church Canada*

New leadership for retirement communities

LANSDALE, Pa.—Living Branches, a newly formed system of local retirement living communities, announced the formation of an executive leadership team to guide integration efforts and manage the operations of its Dock Meadows, Dock Woods and Souderton Mennonite Homes campuses, located in Hatfield, Lansdale and Souderton, Pa., respectively.

The executive leadership team includes two executive directors to lead the operations on the campuses and four shared services roles, which will support the employees who serve the residents on each campus. Brent E. Nafziger has been named executive director for Souderton Mennonite Homes and Dock Meadows, and Russell L. Mast will serve as executive director for Dock Woods.

The shared services roles are Bruce L. Alder, chief officer for special projects and integration; Steven D. Myers, chief financial and technology officer; Katherine S. Shott, chief human resources officer; a chief marketing and public relations officer position remains open.—*Living Branches*

Fair-wage coop helps Gambian women

PIRANG, The Gambia—My Sisters Company is a women's cooperative in Pirang administered by Mennonite Educational and Horticultural Development Associates (MEHDA) in The Gambia.

"Women are involved in making jewelry, purses, aprons and learning tie-dye and batik techniques," says Jacki Brenneman, a former Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) YES team leader in The Gambia.

"We sell earrings that are made with coconuts and dyed fish bones," says Denise Williamson, EMM worker who codirects MEHDA. "We use cow horns in bracelets. Some of this jewelry is sold in very upscale shops in London."

Sister-Link, a group sponsored by Mennonite Women USA, has been helpful in starting a partnership with the women of Pirang. Women from Sister-Link gave My Sisters Company, a fair-wage company, a small loan and have visited, made suggestions and helped sell their products.—*EMM*

Costa Rica women's movement researched

GOSHEN, Ind.—Goshen (Ind.) College students Rachel Halder and Elizabeth Speigle have teamed up with professor of English Beth Martin Birky through the college's summer Maple Scholars Program to delve deeper into the Costa Rica women's movement and organize the data gathered by Birky's multiple research visits to Costa Rica. Birky's first experience in Costa Rica in 1981 as a Goshen student piqued her interest in women's experience in Costa Rica's peaceful culture. After the initial research, Halder, a senior from Parnell, Iowa, began to narrow her study to Women's Cooperatives and her final project included making a short documentary film. Speigle, a junior from Telford, Pa., looked into the impact of religion on the lives of Costa Rican women. —*Goshen College*

Service Adventure: 20-year leadership legacy

PHILIPPI, W.Va.—Service Adventure's first unit is celebrating a birthday and a legacy of service and leadership development.

Current and past participants, leaders and church members gathered June 27-28 in Philippi, W. Va., one of Service Adventure's three charter locations, to celebrate 20 years of uninterrupted volunteer service in the community. Over 20 years of ministry, 552 participants have served alongside host congregations with Service Adventure, a program of Mennonite Mission Network.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

—*compiled by Anna Groff*

IN BRIEF

Mennonite book trilogy completed

How do the practices, habits and routines of worship form Christian—and specifically Mennonite—identity? Goshen (Ind.) College professor of history John D. Roth explores these questions in his new book, *Practices: Mennonite Worship and Witness* (Herald Press, 2009). *Practices* is the final book in his three-volume series on Mennonite identity in the 21st century. —*Goshen College*

New leaders at Laurelville

Brian and Maria Paff have entered the respective roles of director of marketing, advancement and communications and guest services host at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa., as of Sept. 1. A 2004 graduate of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., Brian most recently worked in public relations and development at the Public Museum of Grand Rapids and with The Micah Center, a faith-based social justice advocacy group in West Michigan. Maria most recently served as a resident director at Calvin College and has a bachelor's degree in restorative community justice from Bethel College in North Newton, Kan. —*Laurelville Mennonite Church Center*

Out of the r

Lessons from living in a retirement community for 24 years

by Evan Oswald

Glencroft residents John and Eddie Moore at a basket weaving class.

Author Evan Oswald with his wife Eileen, lower right.

Fifty years ago, we were hard at work at Hesston (Kan.) College. Our first child was about 5 when it seemed advisable to take into our home my wife's folks. Our daughter grew up with four German adults over her—no screaming or hollering allowed. Thirty years later, we learned a lesson too late. A counselor helped her understand she was bothered by perfectionism—being right, getting straight As, dressing right—not because of what she felt was best for her but what others felt was best for her.

cking chair

I learned quickly that some of our residents would live one-third of their lives in a retirement community.

My first lesson about retirement communities was that it would have been much better for our daughter if her grandparents had been in a retirement community when she was growing up. In today's fast-paced world there is too great a generation gap between "the old folks" and the youngsters for them to be living under the same roof. There are few "grossfatter" houses any more.

My second lesson emerged when I came to Glencroft Retirement Community in Glendale, Ariz., in 1985 to be their first paid staff director of activities. I learned quickly that some of our residents would live one-third of their lives in a retirement community. What will they do to find meaningfulness? Many had been hard working and come through the Depression. Work was worthwhile, and any other expenditure of energy was wasted time—except for church-related activity. Many were tired from all that hard work and the pressures of life and thought, I will sit me down in a rocking chair by the fire and rest up for 20 years. That rocking chair was good for about one month before utter boredom rocked in.

We activity people at Glencroft came up with this motto: "The rocking chair is not our symbol." We discovered that to get the people off their duff we had to do a super job of selling the idea that if we don't use it, we lose it. We had so many activities going, especially exercises such as swimming, shuffleboard, walking, horseshoes, billiards, bowling (off campus), golf (off campus) and exercise classes that the administration thought we might be overdoing it. But now (in 2009) we know that exercise not only keeps the muscles in tune but the whole body, including the heart, digestive system and our brain (new synapses in the brain are developed by vigorous exercise). We can't minimize the need for bodily exercise—even for people in wheelchairs.

For my third lesson, I discovered that retirement from our jobs can bring on loneliness. Even in the close living quarters of a retirement community residents can hole up in their apartments and be lonely. To encourage more sociability we promoted group activities to get residents out of their apartments and mix with their neighbors. We brought in regular Friday night programs in our nice auditorium, which seats 200. These programs have become foundational to our total activity program. They are not put over our campus TV channel so the residents will not be tempted to sit by themselves but get out and join the crowd.

The auditorium was a sea of red one week, with balloons all over the place and cheerleaders from a local high school there to help clean out all the particulates from our lungs as we revved up our enthusiasm for the Phoenix Cardinals football team going to play in the Super Bowl. A reporter from the Glendale newspaper took it all in. Donna Swartz, who became director of activities in 1995, knows how to put on parties and celebration.

A fourth lesson is that there is the need to keep up the culture side of life: the Friday Night specials, campus-sponsored excursions to the nationally renowned Native American Heard Museum, Japanese gardens, plays, art museums, dinner theaters and state caverns. And let's not forget the painting art classes that Swartz conducts or the lip-reading classes for hard-of-hearing residents or the weekly movies on travel, science, music, nature, comedy, religion and drama.

One of the more important things on the campus is the volunteerism that happens.

What else brings fulfillment and quality to life? When we give, we shall receive. Glencroft has discovered by persuasion and experience that one of the more important things is the volunteerism that happens on the campus and in the care center, headed up by staff person Jeanne McMenimen's Glencrof-teers' volunteer organization. In 2008, more than 550 people volunteered more than 46,500 hours of service. Over half these were from

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

off campus, but many residents are putting time into quilting for our ($150,000) annual benefit auction in March, the campus pantry grocery store, the care center flower and gift nook and the campus thrift shop for clothes. Monies from these residential enterprises go back into projects that enhance the campus and care center—between $30,000 and $40,000.

Quality volunteer time is also being given to our hospice program in the care center and to three residential organizations: the self-governing Glencroft Residents Association, the Glencrof-teers (mentioned above) and the resident reps. The GRA includes all residents as members and holds a monthly town meeting to conduct business and present information—from the mayor's office to recycling to the fire and police departments. The Glencrof-teers promote and conduct the volunteer program, while the resident reps conduct monthly meetings and become the moccasin telegraph for campus information and news.

I have also learned that to have a vibrant retirement community it should have a strong care center, assisted-living options and social worker staff to direct home-care programs and conduct social/psychological needs analysis of residents. There also needs to be housekeeping, grounds and maintenance departments to care for the infrastructure.

Also important is a quality weekly newspaper, such as the "Glencroft Communicator," edited by staff person Barb Leonard, which ties together all the campus activities and offers the promos to keep the campus wheels greased and turning.

A self-governing church on the campus offers those who don't drive anymore a home church to attend. They hire their own pastor, and spirituality on the campus is enhanced.

A modern day computer lab with printers helps seniors tap into their family activities near and far and is well used.

Little of this will happen if there is not a quality CEO and management team and a creative director of activities.

Many of our residents say, "We should have retired here earlier so we could have enjoyed more of these opportunities for quality living."

Does this sound like utopia? No. There are big challenges to keep retirement communities afloat, especially in this down economy.

Glencroft has been my home for 24 years and shall remain so for whatever years are yet mine.

Evan Oswald is a resident at Glencroft Retirement Community in Glendale, Ariz.

Glencroft's Red Hat ladies out for tea. From left: Virginia Fike, Elaine Miller and Juanita Chambers

Courtesy Glencroft Retirement Community, Glendale, Ariz.

How I greet the day

by Jeanne Lohmann

This is my life, I say, and I don't know if there'll be another.
The chill day stretches before me,
the gray hours waiting to be filled.

Red balloons announce a party,
a phone call tells me
of a friend's debilitating stroke,
sun breaks through the clouds
and a flash of yellow wings
lights up the juniper.

How do I contain this uneasy mix
except to say that other days
happened so, and ready or not,
this is my life I'm learning late
to accept. Here I am, there I was,
and God knows how we end.

This morning it could be enough
to remember the teaching, then
to go from my chair into
everything given, all that is
right now coming toward me.

Jeanne Lohman lives in Olympia, Wash.

Resurrection for the

by Tim Schultz

Those who are middle-aged and older should anticipate a newly revised vision for their lives.

Above: Goldensun (Ariz.) resident Anna Klitzke and SOOP volunteer Roland Yoder dine together.

Right: Student Alan Ami and Betty Handrich enjoy lunch together. Arriving in Kykotsmovi, Ariz. in '07, the Handriches planned to volunteer for one semester. A year later Betty was asked to be principal and now they have no plans to leave the Hopi Mission School.

There is a time in our lives when the future holds so much promise and mystery that the thought of an end to life is merely something to consider on a rainy day. I refer to the beautiful season of life that bridges childhood and adulthood.

Now that I have reached midlife, I sometimes reflect upon those "good old days" of young adulthood, when friendship and emotional connections were ultimate, when older people believed in us and when what was yet to come in our lives was paramount in our minds.

Mrs. Cunningham was my favorite grade school teacher. She commuted from a nearby city to a classroom of ordinary fifth-grade students in the country village where our family lived. A premature passion had taken hold of me in the form of political ambition, and Mrs. Cunningham had me believing I could one day become President of the United States. In the recesses of my childish imagination I mapped out a future filled with excitement, influence and idealism. But fifth grade comes and goes, and eventually I found myself on the other side, where the years behind me are likely more than the years I have left to live.

2008 MMN | photographer Judith Warner

As hard as we try—by looking over old photos or trying to find long-lost friends, for instance—a stubborn reality sets in at midlife, and we must reckon with the end of certain hopes and dreams. Those friends we look up will never again be friends like they once were. The achievements that had been so central in our lives have long been replaced by a daily routine and by decades of faithfulness to more achievable goals.

Reaching midlife—a season in which the anchor of our lives has long held secure—it becomes clearer yet that we still need God. A comforting message woven through the Bible is this promise from God: "I will be with you." A transformation

econd half of life

needs to take place in midlife and beyond that involves reigniting passion about living with purpose, and at this stage it should also include passion for the life to come. Call it a conversion of sorts—or a resurrection.

I have observed some midlife folks who seem uninterested in dreaming. They have great potential to make a difference, but they seem to see the glass of life as more than half empty. I feel like saying to them, "Quit living as if you are confined to a nursing home. Get up, get out and make a difference in someone's life. Rise up out of that tomb of apathy." Even something as simple as volunteering at a soup kitchen can make a big difference. Or fostering and adopting a child. Or being a mentor to a young person who may grow up to be what you wanted to be. None of those things will happen, though, without a resurrection of vision and purpose for the second half of life. The challenge of midlife malaise is a large concern.

Jesus touched on this cycle of gaining and losing momentum. He began his ministry with idealism about the coming kingdom of God. His disciples knew something great would happen as long as Jesus was around. Then everything changed when he died, and the disciples went back to life as they knew it before they met Jesus. Death to a wonderful dream, to that talk about sitting next to Jesus in his kingdom. Get out the fishing nets.

But just when all traces of mystery and hope seemed gone, Jesus reawakened the hearts of his disciples and told them he would be with them, even though he would not be physically present. Jesus told them to wait for a promise. The second stage of their journey, though it lacked his newness and personal presence, was about to become even more profound than the first stage.

Many middle-aged and senior Christians need to hear the voice of Jesus say to them, "I will be with you." It is one thing to know Jesus is with us in a personal way but quite another to believe he is with us in a purposeful way. The strength of youth may be diminished and a fading memory of unfulfilled dreams, but rather than bemoaning the fact that certain goals will never materialize, those who are middle-aged and older should anticipate a newly revised vision for their lives.

There is a largely untapped mine of wisdom and energy in the over-50 age group in our churches. Rather than retiring to a warm climate and waiting for the inevitable, older people are finding a new lease on life involving service to their churches and communities. We are looking to a time in our churches when there likely will be fewer young people and more people over 50 for the next 20 years or so. With all our emphasis on youth programs, we also need an increased emphasis on engaging older members to become more involved in the church. The dawn of youthful idealism and energy is desirable, but we also need the dusk of the reflective and refined experience of older believers.

A couple in my church are now both retired, but they are two of the most valuable participants in the church. She serves as an elder. He washes pots and pans in the kitchen, serves during community meals and is there to help in other ways. She maintains the bulletin board, and both sit toward the front during worship services, which encourages me. They appear to have a clear purpose in life. Their lives give the impression of being more about beginnings than endings. Instead of getting out the rocking chairs, they live as resurrection people—with purpose for the second half (or a bit shorter) of life.

It is one thing to know Jesus is with us in a personal way but quite another to believe he is with us in a purposeful way.

Another senior woman in our congregation works a part-time job with purpose. She already had a career as a single missionary in Africa for decades, but these days she works so that she can send money to help educate and benefit her "family" overseas. An inner voice of love tells her she has a calling, even as she awaits her eternal reward. Sadly, too many have lost that sense of calling, even those much younger than her.

I heard of an older man who confessed, "I know I will never become President of the United States, but now I realize I won't be president of anything." This man reached a crossroads where he could easily close the book on his dreams if he chose. He could just wait for the end to arrive. What he needs is for someone to come along and say to him, "Sure, you didn't become president. Most of us don't. But what about becoming president of your block club or a local service organization? What about aiming more toward what others need for you to be for them than focusing on the void left by not attaining what you thought you always wanted for yourself?"

What he needs even more than others' advice is to hear the inner voice of the One who desires to call him out of his sense of worthlessness and ignite the spark of a new calling in his soul.

Regret can have a paralyzing effect in our lives if we are not careful. Something that can replace regret—and is even more powerful—is the resurrection of a God-given purpose for the second half of our lives. Even when early dreams have died, our hearts can be awakened to hear Jesus say, "I will be with you. … You will be my witnesses."

Tim Schultz is pastor of Leetonia (Ohio) Mennonite Church.

Help the widowed

Here's why and how.

by Ethel Kolb with Barbara Borntrager

A pastor's wife said: "What can be done to help widowed people? We don't know what their needs are." This raised the challenge to find out what the needs of widows and widowers are and communicate those needs to the church. With the input of a widow, a member of her family and a pastor's wife, someone developed a survey to determine the needs of the widowed. The survey was distributed to about 60 widowed people in 10 Mennonite congregations and a few other people across the country. This is a summary of the results.

Cultures have changed over time, but the needs of the widowed remain.

Biblical background: The Scriptures tell us the widowed are to be treated and cared for. Exodus 22:22 says: "Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless" (NIV). These are the words the Lord gave Moses to give to the people. Deuteronomy 16:11 includes the widows and orphans in the community celebration during the Feast of Weeks. Deuteronomy 24:19-21 commands the community to leave produce in the fields and on the vines for the alien, fatherless and widowed. Isaiah 1:17 instructs us to "seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow" (NIV).

Acts 6:1 lays out the complaint of the widowed and the first church's response to their needs. A system of care also developed from this complaint to meet the needs of the widowed. Much of 1 Timothy 5 addresses the needs and actions of the widowed and what the response of the widow's family and church should be. James 1:27 defines what makes our actions acceptable to God our Father: "to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (NIV). Cultures have changed over time, but the needs of the widowed remain.

Life for the widowed person changes dramatically upon the death of the spouse. This article deals mostly with the needs of the surviving spouse, but when dependent children live with the surviving spouse, the issues faced intensify.

Usually, adult children are expected to help, and most do what they can, but some people don't have children. Others have only one or two children who may not be living near enough to help on a regular basis or on short notice. Our culture no longer invites the widowed parent into the home of one of the children. This creates an opportunity for the church family to fill in the gap and provide support. Churches can develop a care program for the widowed. This could be done through a benevolent committee or a separate committee trained specifically to assist the widowed. Initially, a designated couple or person "known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom" could visit the widowed to discuss and analyze the needs, explore how to meet those needs and develop a working plan to be implemented.

Social: The survey listed social opportunities and fellowship as the leading initial and ongoing need. Widowed people need relationships with other people more than ever. Comments from the survey said: "If only people would call to see how I'm doing, it would mean so much. It would show they cared about me." "I felt abandoned. At first I was cared for well, but now I am forgotten." "Having someone to just listen" was repeated over and over. Social interaction and activities are needed immediately after the death and on an ongoing basis as long as the person remains single. Extend an invitation to any event and don't be offended if the response is no or a request for a rain check.

For the young widow/widowers with children, social interaction with someone of the same sex as the missing parent is important. These children need a positive role model to fill in the gap but not replace the missing parent. Providing the children with a role model of the now-deceased parent is important for the children's social development. Consistency and follow through are important to these children. When you say you are going to do something, make sure you follow through.

Daily living: Many responses dealt with daily living needs. Transportation is a real need for those who don't drive at all or have limited driving ability. For the person living independently, routine maintenance and small jobs around the house need to be done. Having a list of people available to serve as gardener, plumber, electrician or driver was one suggestion in the survey.

Financial: One-fourth of the respondents listed financial needs as a significant part of their daily lives. Many older people have limited income. For the low-income survivor, a few dollars a week or two before the social security check comes in is helpful. Gift certificates for food, heating oil, a local department store or a roll of first class stamps are other ways to ease the financial needs. Some financial needs can be short-term or ongoing and can be supervised by a financial counselor.

Physical: After such a traumatic experience, the surviving spouse may experience physical problems. Frequent contact will aid in identifying potential problems and obtaining early intervention as needed. Interventions may be short or long term. During an illness, daily contact to check on their welfare is necessary.

Emotional: Emotions are an important part of life. Each event in our life affects our emotions. Death has the greatest impact on our emotions. It is easy to become discouraged, depressed and full of self-pity. One respondent said, "No one really knows how I struggle with depression." Be understanding; take the initiative to ask the widowed about their emotional state. Often it provides the opportunity to share thoughts, joys and sorrows, needs and concerns. Recognize that grieving does not end with the funeral or the first anniversary of the death. Mood swings are normal and may occur for a long time.

Spiritual: Sixty percent of respondents said the experience of losing their spouse drew them closer to the Lord, while the remaining said it had no real effect on their relationship to God.

Suffering the loss of a companion or loved one may draw us closer to God or drive us away, making us bitter and miserable. The widowed may need to be reminded that God has a purpose for being here that is not fulfilled. They need help finding this purpose. Several respondents mentioned that getting involved in outreach programs helped them move on in life and gave them a sense of purpose. Participation in church activities, committees and outreach opportunities can help meet spiritual, social and emotional needs at the same time.

People who never married or have experienced separation through divorce, experience some of the same needs. Singleness in the Mennonite culture is often viewed as a flaw, especially if the single person is a female. Females in the Mennonite culture have historically been taught to be passive and submissive to men, making life as a single woman difficult. Single men fair somewhat better, since men are viewed as leaders and are encouraged to be independent. Paul admonishes singles to stay single because they have the freedom to serve the Lord without the encumbrances of marriage and family. Remember them also as you accept the challenges of helping God's people who are in need.

Singleness in the Mennonite culture is often viewed as a flaw, especially if the person is a female.

Conclusion: Each church should have a system for caring for the widowed. How this looks will depend on the size of the church and gifts within the church. It may be more feasible for smaller churches to share resources in serving the widowed. However it is handled, there needs to be an initial evaluation of the individual's needs, a plan developed and resources provided to meet those needs. There must also be consistent, ongoing periodic assessment of the individual's needs and adjustments made for as long as care is needed.

The needs expressed in this limited survey are too complex and great in scope for any individual to handle. The needs of the widowed will need to be met by all members of the body of Christ participating together in the most effective, efficient manner possible. How that looks will vary as much as the individuals involved are different. Perhaps a committee could evaluate the initial needs, then establish support for the widowed through small groups or in partnership with a couple or community resources. These are only ideas to start the thought process. The real work begins in the heart of each Christian brother and sister, continues in the church family and extends into the community.

Ethel Kolb attends Mechville Mennonite Church, Fredericksburg, Pa. Barbara Borntrager, Ethel's daughter, attends Parker Hills Bible Fellowship in Parker, Colo.

The spiritual nee

by Beth Landis

Mennonite men and women are some of the backbone of congregational life. Their involvement in every institution for the past 60 years has been pivotal to the next generation's faith journey. They supported the church colleges with their attendance, sending their children and their financial gifts. They purchased publications from Herald Press and participated in Civilian Public Service. Mennonite Central Committee relief sales, Mennonite Disaster Service, church camps and conferences were a result of the creativity and response to needs that this generation noticed.

Questions: Now that they are beyond their particularly productive years, what kind of pastoral care are they receiving? This question came to light when an acquaintance and I talked about the variation in pastoral visitation. The following comments are an integration of conversations with friends and pastors across the country.

What are their spiritual needs? Are they being met? What models have been used for caring and sharing and what are the current models? How do these models vary in terms of size of congregation, age distribution, pastoral preferences and geographic region.

A large church may have a youth pastor, but few have a pastor for the elderly.

Spiritual needs: The spirituality of aging varies among individuals, but some generalizations include a need to review life events, face the certainty of death and process the emotional aspects of multiple chronic diseases and losses. One minister said, "At the heart of it is that older people want to be known by their pastor. They want their pastor to have the memorial service and know them enough to reflect on their life and be the bridge to the family's grief process."

Past models: Historically, some pastors did their visitations in the evening, and now ministers are expected to care for themselves and their families. One older woman said she felt uncomfortable when the male minister came by himself and wished his wife would be along, like it was several decades ago. Some ministers created more of a social event, and others focused on prayer and Bible verses. Ministers were expected to visit those in the hospital, the nursing home and the homebound.

The Amish culture has a highly developed art of visitation and intergenerational caring. The community is expected to recognize need and respond. Many Conservative Mennonite churches don't pay their pastors, so they are not expected to visit.

Although Mennonite Church USA has established guidelines for pastoral salary, there aren't any sample job descriptions, which assumes churches must develop their own. A solo pastor job description in a rural community differs greatly from a person who is part of a team, especially in an area with lots of Mennonite churches. Most congregations have some expectation for visitation, but does the church leadership committee hold the pastor accountable? Do the expectations match the needs of the congregation?

Current models: Some solo pastors are fairly diligent about home visitation; others fulfill other obligations first. One pastor told me he does things with deadlines—sermons and committee meetings—and since visitation doesn't have a deadline, it gets put off.

A large church with a pastoral team may have a youth pastor, but few have a pastor for the elderly. They may have a caring pastor or visitation pastor or use some other term that encompasses elderly visitation, but it includes all ages with the title.

The lay team approach is popular in larger churches. This includes lay people with some training, such as Stephen Ministries or an equipping model, with education and support.

A congregation may develop rituals, such as mugs, litanies or birthday songs when folks turn 50 or 70. Educational seminars with an invitation to the entire community are a way to reach out to the neighborhood. Game night with the Sage Club and the middle schoolers can be a way to promote intergenerational activity. The church may have different ways to integrate the healthy older people as compared with those who are homebound.

Recommendations

1. Determine the needs of the elderly for pastoral care within the congregation. Individuals will vary widely and will change throughout their life. Those who are homebound or disabled are often powerless to express their requests.

2. Have some dialogue between representatives of the elderly and the leadership team to determine how to meet those needs. What resources, money, time, people, should be used to address the need? The questions of paid staff and lay people fit here.

3. Congregations need to articulate their needs and communicate to current or candidating pastors.

4. Pastors need to be honest about their skills

Courtesy Greencroft Communities, Goshen, Ind.

For an article on young adult's expectations of pastoral care, go to www.themennonite.org.

ds of the elderly

Observations and recommendations

and preferences and if they are not doing visitation develop an alternate plan with their leadership team. The pastor should have some kind of list or accountability to the team. The congregation may need to define what "regular" visitation means, as most pastors did not want to commit a number. The activities of lay people should also be monitored and evaluated for meeting the needs.

5. We may need to change the expectations of older people. As older people live longer, the sheer numbers mean that in most congregations a pastor cannot do a complete elder-care program and tend to other responsibilities. Several pastors said, "We can't approach pastoral care the same as we did 50 years ago. We need to change the perception that if I was visited by a lay person, I didn't get a pastoral visit. By enhancing the quality of that visit, we meet spiritual needs."

6. If lay people are used, they should be commissioned by the congregation. An announcement in the bulletin hardly conveys the importance of their role and the sense that the pastor has that they are an extension of the church ministry team. Honor their service annually with a luncheon or some other recognition.

7. If lay people are used, the pastor should be clear about those responsibilities. Are they doing a social visit and dropping off the weekly bulletin and tapes? Do they have skills for counseling for life reviews or end-of-life issues? Are they supposed to pray at every visit?

8. Purchase a Communion set for home use or adapt the one the congregation uses to offer those who cannot attend.

9. Encourage preplanning of funerals, for the entire congregation or Sunday school classes or individuals. Use it as an opportunity to discuss spiritual needs. Several pastors said the death bed is not necessarily the best place to do spiritual work. Reconciling career, relationships, roles, strengths and weaknesses should be done before getting frail.

10. Recognize the end of life, rapidly declining health and crisis as a time for spiritual need, which may be defined differently by individuals but certainly needs to be part of congregational care.

11. Continue the conversation on a conference or national level. Learn from other congregations and see what works best.

12. Continue the conversation in your families, small groups and Sunday school classes. I found this to be a hot topic.

Some thought pastors should be visiting more. Some thought an ordained person, specifically called and commissioned to serve, is somehow different from a lay person. Some were concerned about elderly who get moved in the last years of life and now have no church community to support them. Some know elderly people who need counseling, have no access to a professional therapist and need good spiritual care. Some pastors said they did not get good training in how to counsel at the end of life. Visitation gets much more complicated when communication is impaired with dementia, stroke and Parkinson's disease.

One elderly woman who did not get visited frequently excused the pastor: "I am sure he is busy." Somehow that fits the generation of those in their 80s, willing to defend the pastor and the church at their own expense. She did not feel she was entitled to pastoral visits but received them as a gift when they did happen.

As one pastor said, "I trust the presence of God a lot more than I used to. Visits are not about me. A thoughtful conversation can be a prayer. Meeting the spiritual needs of the elderly is an art, not a science. I think pastoral care and visitation are extremely important and make a difference in how I preach. It is a humbling and holy experience to walk with them."

Beth Landis is a family and gerontology nurse practitioner living in Eagle, Idaho. She is a member of Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship.

If lay people are used, they should be commissioned by the congregation.

Pastoral care: Chaplain Vanette Kashmer visits Helen Reinhardt at Evergreen Place, Greencroft Communities, Goshen (Ind.) campus.

Publishing in tough times

Ron Rempel is executive director of Mennonite Publishing Network.

Two years ago in this column I invited readers to celebrate the final payment in a long journey of debt elimination by Mennonite Publishing Network. In a period of about six years, MPN, through a combined effort involving many people, repaid a debt of more than $5 million. We still feel deep appreciation for the support and contributions of individuals and congregations during that time.

We were optimistic as we prepared the budget for the fiscal year ending Jan. 31, 2009. In response to a board request to start building reserves, we developed a budget with a projected reserve of 1 percent of sales. For the first six months of the year, we got close to sales targets, and it looked as though we would end the year with a small reserve.

Then the recession hit in the summer and fall of 2008. Sales softened on all fronts, but particularly through the book retail outlets. We ended the year with an overall loss of $270,500 on total sales of $3.28 million. About half the loss was due to noncash charges (e.g. depreciation and inventory adjustments). The remaining portion of the loss decreased MPN's cash reserves.

In January, as we finalized the budget for the current fiscal year (Feb. 1 to Jan. 31, 2010), we knew the year would be tough. In this year's budget, we cut overhead costs by eliminating some positions and trimmed expenses we believed were least likely to affect sales. We set what we believed to be realistic sales targets.

We also put in place measures to stimulate sales—hiring a director of marketing and sales and planning for an expanded version of *Simply in Season*, accompanied by an extensive marketing and sales plan this fall. We scheduled a range of new resources and books to be released in the spring, in time for the churchwide assembly in Columbus, Ohio, in early July. The enthusiastic response and robust sales there confirmed the timeliness and relevance of these materials.

However, the economic downturn is hitting us—and many other publishers—harder than anticipated. So far this year, sales of congregational resource materials are slightly above budget, but sales of books have continued to decline and are about 20 percent below budget. Given MPN's limited reserves, we are particularly concerned about an extremely tight cash situation as we set limits on how far to draw on a line of credit.

Amid the sea of books and resources that are available to you and your congregation, take time to consider those produced by your own denominational publisher.

This fall, we are taking several short-term measures to cut costs and bring in extra cash while waiting for longer-term sales-stimulus measures to take effect. For example, all staff are taking a two-week "pay furlough"—two weeks off without pay. We regret having to institute measures such as this. At the same time, we're aware of similar steps being taken by other church agencies and by other companies, whether public or private.

We are stepping up marketing efforts by improving the usability and searchability of the MPN Web store, planning for greater use of email to notify congregations and members of new and existing resources, and establishing gift certificate capability. Conference-based resource advocates are being creative in highlighting new resources wherever possible—resources produced by MPN and by other parts of our church.

Hopefully these measures will prove to be sufficient. If not, we will take additional measures to remain financially viable so we can continue to fulfill the publishing mission mandated by the church—to help equip the church to experience and share the gospel of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective.

We share these challenges in order to be transparent about MPN's financial picture and to invite your prayers and support. Amid the sea of books and resources that are available to you and your congregation, take time to consider those produced by your own denominational publisher. Take advantage of opportunities to provide feedback and counsel on what is most needed to help you and all members of your congregation be grounded in the faith and share God's good news at home, in your congregations, across the street and around the world. TM

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **History of MYF**—Bob Yoder
- **Short-term service**—Matt Harms

How to avoid the 'Styrofoam wars'

Creation Care Network launches new greening congregations project.

Congregations addressing creation-care issues often find themselves caught up in "Styrofoam wars"—an argument that is rarely resolved about whether or not to use Styrofoam cups for hot beverages.

Luke Gascho, executive director at the Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen (Ind.) College, says churches can avoid these conflicts when they set up activities that work at the issues in helpful, nonpolarizing ways.

"People tend to say [creation-care issues] are mostly a liberal idea," Gascho says. "To me that's not the point at all."

The new Green Congregation Stewardship Score project from the Mennonite Creation Care Network (MCCN) provides one way for congregations to work at the issue through a creation stewardship self-assessment process.

"We as a council felt that some organizational process would help a church," Gascho says. "This will help churches not just go to the Styrofoam issue."

The project involves reviewing a congregation's creation stewardship in nine criteria, rating the congregation's creation stewardship (see box) and determining the congregation's score. The nine concepts come from a chapter in Gascho's book *Creation Care: Keepers of the Earth,* part of Mennonite Mutual Aid's Living Stewardship Series.

"The intent of the form," Gascho says, "is to give some guidance to a congregation in assessing where they are in making commitments and taking actions related to caring for creation."

The easiest one for congregations to start with is the energy audit, according to Gascho. It offers a way to not only reduce energy use but also to save money.

Offering recycling at a church provides a nonthreatening activity to green congregations, as some communities still do not offer recycling, says Gascho.

He also hopes congregations have fun with greening projects. For example, hosting a meal with all food coming from within 100 miles of the church.

Congregations will probably face the most challenges in the "Creation Care Statement" section, which integrates creation care within the framework of the congregation's mission and core values, Gascho says.

MCCN introduced the scorecard at Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 and Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15. At Convention 2009, more than 100 people signed up to act as initial contact people from their congregations for the project. The workshops and material in Paraguay at Assembly 15 also proved popular.

"We were amazed at how many people were interested," Gascho says.

After MCCN receives the results, council members or interns will enter them in a database so churches can contact one another.

MCCN will also provide highlights of creation stewardship activities on its Web site, www.mennocreationcare.org.

Gascho says MCCN aims to have 100 congregations make some kind of commitment to the project by spring 2010, followed by a rolling cycle to ask more congregations to respond.

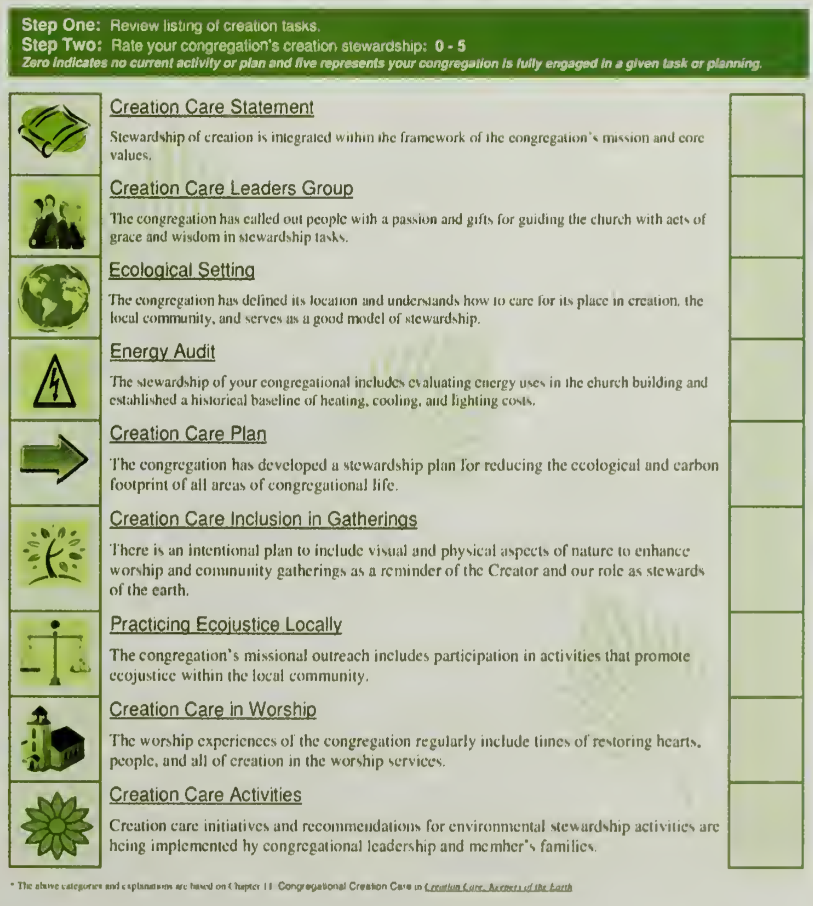
When MCCN started in 2005, it worked mostly with individuals. Through the response at Convention 2009, Gascho says MCCN discovered that congregations also want to connect.

The project helps churches with the "idea that this is a ministry or missional activity. It really fits in well in the midst of everything else," Gascho says.

MCCN is a binational Christian organization affiliated with the Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada.—*Anna Groff*

The reviews below are available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE



Step One: Review listing of creation tasks.
Step Two: Rate your congregation's creation stewardship: **0 - 5**
Zero indicates no current activity or plan and five represents your congregation is fully engaged in a given task or planning.

Creation Care Statement Stewardship of creation is integrated within the framework of the congregation's mission and core values.	
Creation Care Leaders Group The congregation has called out people with a passion and gifts for guiding the church with acts of grace and wisdom in stewardship tasks.	
Ecological Setting The congregation has defined its location and understands how to care for its place in creation, the local community, and serves as a good model of stewardship.	
Energy Audit The stewardship of your congregational includes evaluating energy uses in the church building and established a historical baseline of heating, cooling, and lighting costs.	
Creation Care Plan The congregation has developed a stewardship plan for reducing the ecological and carbon footprint of all areas of congregational life.	
Creation Care Inclusion in Gatherings There is an intentional plan to include visual and physical aspects of nature to enhance worship and community gatherings as a reminder of the Creator and our role as stewards of the earth.	
Practicing Ecojustice Locally The congregation's missional outreach includes participation in activities that promote ecojustice within the local community.	
Creation Care in Worship The worship experiences of the congregation regularly include times of restoring hearts, people, and all of creation in the worship services.	
Creation Care Activities Creation care initiatives and recommendations for environmental stewardship activities are being implemented by congregational leadership and member's families.	

* The above categories and explanations are based on Chapter 11 Congregational Creation Care in Creation Care, Keepers of the Earth

In Mongolia, Mennonite equals ministry

Although no Mennonite churches, 'Mennonite scholarships' offer opportunities.

Petrus Handoyo

Zangilmaa*, (left) a student at Union Bible Theological College in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, teaches at a ger church in Ikhkhet, Mongolia.

There are no Mennonite churches in Mongolia. Most Mongolians, including Christians, have heard little about the denomination. But for students at Union Bible Theological College, "Mennonite" means an opportunity to minister.

Last school year, 66 of the 166 Union students received student aid for tuition, dormitory fees, meals and books from Schowalter Foundation grants through Mennonite Mission Network. On campus, the grants are known simply as "Mennonite scholarships."

The funds also help students dealing with emergency financial problems. For Bat-Tulga Zolzaya, who completed her third year of studies last year, it was the death of her grandfather—the man who paid her dormitory fee. The Schowalter grant filled the gap after her grandfather's death.

Petrus Handoyo, who serves in Mongolia with his wife, Yuliana, through Mennonite Church Muria Synod of Indonesia and Mennonite Mission Network, taught at Union through last year.

"In Mongolia, the churches do not care about denominations. They want to be independent even as they seek partnership," Handoyo says. "[Mennonites] have not planted any churches. We have just worked with the churches there and supported them."

That support is more than monetary. Union Biblical Theological College, the largest and only registered seminary in Mongolia, recently translated and published Palmer Becker's Missio Dei booklet "What is an Anabaptist Christian" in collaboration with the Mission Network. More than 200 copies already have been distributed on campus, with positive responses. Handoyo says the booklet will answer questions, including many from those who receive financial aid and wonder about the Mennonite group behind the gifts.

As Christianity grows in Mongolia, more theological students are examining different beliefs and experiences of God and church. When democracy arrived in Mongolia in 1991, there were less than a handful of known Christians in the nation. Today, more than 400 churches and more than 40,000 Christians exist—most in the capital of Ulaanbaatar but a growing group away from the city.

This spring, as he has done most of his years teaching at Union, Handoyo traveled beyond Ulaanbaatar with a group of Union students to speak about Jesus. The trip was underwritten by the Mission Network.

Seven students, including three Schowalter grant recipients, traveled more than 230 miles to Ikhkhet in the southeast portion of Gobi Desert. In the town of just over 2,000 people, the students connected with Zalbirliin Orgoo (Palace of Prayer), a house church meeting in a ger—a Mongolian round, felt tent.

The students hosted a basketball competition, led seminars on Christian families, offered guitar lessons, hosted a worship service and worked with the congregation's four Sunday school teachers—none older than 15.

Though not everyone in town was friendly to the Christians—many Mongolians see Christianity as a Western religion—Ikhkhet's governor, Hemekh, welcomed the group. Handoyo says the man had seen the Bible and told the group he had found no false teachings within it. The church's programs, he said, bring spiritual renewal to the community.

The trip will be the last for Handoyo, at least for a while. Mongolia's ministry of justice, which oversees religious institutions, will now allow the college only two visas for expatriate lecturers. Handoyo will instead work as a volunteer lecturer at Mongolia International University, teaching philosophy, studies in religions and cross-cultural learning.

Petrus and Yuliana Handoyo and their two children, Hizkia and Yonas, are from Semarang, Indonesia.

They began serving as workers through Mennonite Church Muria Synod of Indonesia and Mennonite Mission Network in 2001. They live in Ulaanbaatar.—*Ryan Miller of Mennonite Mission Network*

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*Many Mongolians go by only a single name.

EB makes plans to address conflict

Delegates at Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 passed a resolution in response to ongoing conflict around denominational statements on human sexuality.

The document, entitled "Resolution on Following Christ and Growing Together as Communities Even in Conflict," calls on the Executive Board "to work with conferences to provide and encourage the use of resources that assist conferences and congregations to engage in this discernment."

The Executive Board adopted a discernment plan during an Aug. 25 phone conference. The first step in the plan calls for the Executive Board, Executive Leadership staff, conference boards and executive committees and conference leaders to spend 30 days in prayer.

On Oct. 1, the Executive Board will ask conference boards and leadership to respond to a list of assumptions and questions and send the responses to the Executive Board.

"Our hope is to collect information from conferences by Jan. 8, 2010, so that it can be compiled in time for the February board meeting of the Executive Board," wrote Ed Diller in an email to Mennonite Church USA leaders on Aug. 28. The Executive Board meets Feb. 17-19, 2010.

The following questions are for conference leaders:

- What is happening in your conference and congregations with respect to issues relating to human sexuality and homosexuality?
- Are there conflicts in your conference and congregations with respect to these issues, and if so, what are these conflicts?
- What resources would be helpful to your conference and congregations in dealing with these issues to engage in conversation about our differences?
- Recognizing that we are a missional-driven church centered on Christ, rather than an issue driven one, what suggestions do you have for how conferences, congregations and the denomination can work together on these matters?
- What other questions or comments would you like to share with the Executive Board and other conferences about these issues?

In 1995, the church adopted three documents that will provide background assumptions for the collection of responses: "Vision: Healing and Hope," *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and the "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love statement."—*Anna Groff*

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Students, teachers from Ethiopia reunite

Eastern Mennonite Missions missionaries founded the Academy 50 years ago.

Herb Kraybill

Esther Becker (right), an EMM missionary and teacher at the Bible Academy in Ethiopia, visits with Asrat Tenkir, from the class of 1984.

In the fall of 1959, 13 men and three women enrolled as freshmen students at the fledgling Bible Academy in Nazareth, Ethiopia. It was an inauspicious start in a small rented house across the tracks from the Mennonite Mission hospital compound.

But in its 23 years of operation, the Christian high school served more than 800 men and women and grew to become a famous educational powerhouse. The Marxist government confiscated the property and finally closed it down in 1982.

Fifty years since that modest beginning, around 200 of its students, faculty and staff gathered to reminisce, sing, laugh, cry, eat and pray together July 24-25 at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in the greater Washington area.

"For two days our beloved Bible Academy came to life again," says Ashenafi Abedje, a 1969 Academy graduate and journalist who now works for the Voice of America. "They are two days sure to be etched in our collective memories."

Seated across the table from Chester and Sara Jane Wenger, missionaries with Eastern Mennonite Missions who founded the school, Belai Habte-Jesus, a 1973 graduate, had many questions about starting the school.

Belai, who hails from down-country Bedenno, Harar, Ethiopia, realized that his life had been totally transformed by the schools the mission had started—both the small elementary school in his hometown and the Bible Academy.

Now a well-known doctor and public health consultant, Belai directs 12 health agencies of Human Touch and Capital View Health Services in the Washington area, Pennsylvania, Colorado and California.

Wenger says he believed students needed quality vocational training in addition to biblical studies. This way the Ethiopian church could become strong, indigenous and self-supporting. He says his greatest fulfillment is to see the caliber of the Academy graduates and to hear of the contributions they are making in church and society.

"Some of us are physicians, lawyers, teachers; others are journalists, medical technologists, computer programmers; yet others make their living in the service and transportation sectors. Whatever we do for a living, we are one proud bunch—proud of our past and proud of where we stand today," said Abedje at the gathering.

He also honored the former teachers, calling them "our silent heroes."

"These are exceptional people who have always given of themselves—expecting nothing in return. Many of us attribute at least part of our success to the nurturing and guidance they provided us during our school years," he said.

The alumni group raised funds to bring their beloved history teacher, the blind Alemu Checole, who traveled alone from Ethiopia for the reunion. Known for his legendary, encyclopedic memory, Checole apologized for needing to read "Aging," the poem he'd written in Braille for the occasion. Negash Kebede, a 1963 graduate and principal of the academy at the time of its closing, now serves as president of the Meserete Kristos College.

—Jewel Showalter of Eastern Mennonite Missions

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MCC promotes sustainable farming

Mennonite Central Committee launches project to help North Korean farmers.

Mennonite Central Committee is launching a project to help farmers in North Korea produce more grain through environmentally sustainable practices. North Korea, officially the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), has experienced serious food shortages in recent years, and MCC has donated tens of thousands of tons of food to people in the DPRK since 1995. MCC is undertaking the new project to help farmers in the DPRK increase their harvests of rice, wheat, barley and corn through what is known as "conservation agriculture."

Conservation agriculture aims to increase organic matter and nutrients in the soil, boost yields and minimize expensive inputs such as fertilizer and fuel, according to James Frey, an MCC worker from Winnipeg, Man., who is coordinating the project. For example, conservation agriculture leaves crop stubble to decompose in the fields and avoids plowing in order to protect beneficial organisms that recycle soil nutrients. It can also involve planting clover and other "cover crops" between harvests to protect and enrich the soil. Frey says that conservation agriculture is especially well-suited to the DPRK, where fuel and fertilizer are in short supply.

Since 2006, tensions over the DPRK's nuclear program have caused countries such as South Korea to halt fertilizer shipments and other aid to the country. Many farmers in the DPRK now receive only about one-quarter of the fertilizer they need, says Frey.

MCC is planning to provide agricultural equipment, supplies and training to three cooperative farms in Bongchon County, Sariwon City and Hwangju County in southern DPRK. Each farm has several thousand residents who live and work together.

Frey made his introductory visit to the farms in April with three MCC colleagues.

"We got the impression that from the youngest to the oldest, everyone was involved," Frey says.

During that visit, farmers and government officials did not speak directly about the problems of hunger and malnutrition that stunt the growth of more than one-third of children in the DPRK, according to the World Health Organization.

However, Frey observed that everyone involved in the project seemed focused on the need to increase production at the communal farms. The farms provide roughly three-quarters of their harvests to the government, and the government distributes food to the general population.

Frey plans to visit the DPRK about four times per year to coordinate the project until its completion in December 2011. He is working on providing the cooperative farms with no-till seeders, which are seed-planting machines designed for unplowed fields.

MCC's budget for the conservation agriculture project is $1 million, which includes money from MCC's account with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, an organization that receives funds from Canadian farmers and the Canadian government. Financial contributions for this project should be designated "North Korea" and may be made online at mcc.org/donate.—*Tim Shenk of Mennonite Central Committee*

Dan Wiens

From left, community leaders Pak Yong Kee, Ri Yong Sil and Pak Kum Chol at Pongui Cooperative Farm in Sariwon City, Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

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The new Mennonite Artist Project proclaims, 'Art is a Mennonite thing'

Lowell Brown

Kim Stauffer (left) and Katherine Yoder screen print the Mennonite Artist Project logo on thrift-store clothing. The logo was designed by Marc Bovino.

Kim Stauffer's profession as an actor in New York City took her outside the Mennonite community in which she grew up. Stauffer's "Mennonite world" and "theater world" remain mostly separate from one another, she says.

She's not the only artist managing these separate spheres. Many Mennonite artists who work outside church structures face difficulties finding each other, she says.

"I think that traditionally it has been easier for us to embrace the art forms of music, visual art and written word," Stauffer says, "yet things involving the direct use of the body as a means of artistic expression, such as in theater or dance, become more questionable and suspect."

But the new Mennonite Artist Project (MAP)—an online social network and monthly in-person meeting—helps her connect with other Mennonites facing similar challenges.

There are wonderful pockets of artists ... but there wasn't a consistent, inclusive forum for Mennonite artists.—Kim Stauffer

"There are wonderful pockets of artists," Stauffer says, "like in *DreamSeeker* magazine or at a Mennofolk festival, but there wasn't a consistent, inclusive forum for Mennonite artists." Stauffer says.

Stauffer, who attends Manhattan (N.Y.) Mennonite Fellowship, founded MAP after discovering another Mennonite—actress Elizabeth Hess—at a New York City audition in 2007.

Then in the fall of 2008 Stauffer asked a group of New York City artists with varied Mennonite connections to meet regularly; they eventually became the MAP board: Katherine Yoder, Tom Kelley and Lowell Brown. The board now meets monthly in New York City.

Stauffer says members around the United States can post events on the site and encourages "local chapters" of MAP in other cities to emerge.

The project launched its Web site, MennoniteArtist Project.com, in June. More than 300 artists have posted bios, events, classified ads and examples of their work.

"We didn't know if it would take off, but within a month it spread really quickly," says Stauffer. "I love to log on and look through everyone's profiles. It is so inspiring to look at the art being made by this community of strangers and friends. It really is a proclamation that pursuit of the arts is a Mennonite thing."

This free online network offers timely support.

"MAP offers a free space for artists to give and receive counsel—which may be especially valuable in a tough economy," Stauffer says.

It also offers an "ArtShare" page for members to post and exchange their skills, materials and work.

Recently Stauffer and another board member, Yoder, exchanged skills: Stauffer's movement and Reiki training for Yoder's wardrobe consulting.

One of MAP's immediate goals is to connect with professors and students of art, English, music and theater at Mennonite colleges and universities.

Stauffer says she hopes that no graduating student artists from a Mennonite college will feel alone when entering the workplace, as MAP offers them a place to look for advice and make connections.

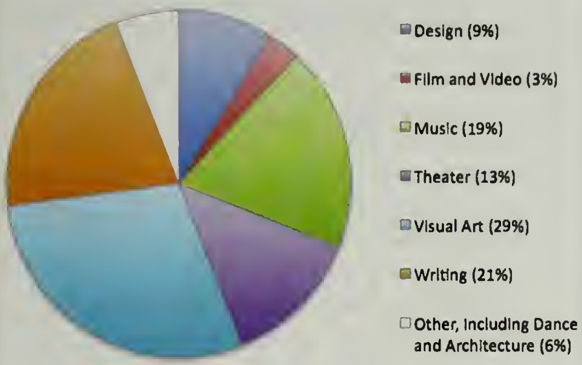
Down the road, Stauffer says she would love to see MAP offer a mentorship program and scholarships, but at this point MAP faces limitations, as it is run by a volunteer board and with no staff.

Still, MAP produces new collaborations. For example, both *Rhubarb* magazine, the Mennonite Literary Society publication from Manitoba, and Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, the host of several annual arts weekends in Pennsylvania, are members.

MAP members offer diversity in terms of their Mennonite connections, location and artistic disciplines.

The Web site is open only to members, but membership is open and free for Mennonite-related artists and available online.—*Anna Groff*

What kind of art do MAP members make?



Erika Ogawa and the Japan Society

Catherine Friesen, a member of Mennonite Artist Project, performs in a play in New York City.

Katherine Yoder, clothing designer and MAP board member, describes tensions of learning 'new language' and remembering her 'mother tongue' of faith.

Name: Katherine Yoder
Position: Clothing designer for Eileen Fisher
Location: Brooklyn, N.Y.
Church: Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship

Describe Eileen Fisher designs.

Eileen Fisher's target demographic is a woman in her late 30s to 65. There is also a big emphasis on timelessness and longevity. We don't encourage you to buy a whole new wardrobe every season. We also do a fair amount of organic and some Fair Trade product.

Describe your career journey

My undergraduate degree is in peace studies, women's studies and psychology from Goshen (Ind.) College. It never occurred to me that design was an option. Growing up, I would make clothes out of whatever was at hand, like leaves and Kleenex. My last year at Goshen I took a jewelry-making class and loved it. After college I did the Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience because it had an arts focus, and later I worked in the buying department at Ten Thousand Villages. Then I got into Parsons School of Design in New York City.

How do you deal with the extremes of the different worlds [Mennonite and design] that you must live in?

If Mennonites want to be effective in their interactions with the outside world, they must learn to speak another language. But we are in danger of forgetting our mother tongue (the language of faith). To stay fluent in our mother tongue we need to be conscious of when we are speaking which language and maintain a connection to our roots. I learned to speak the language of design at school and then later at DKNY and Eileen Fisher. I lived at Menno House during my first two years in New York, and I'm involved at Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship, which allows me to continue practicing my mother tongue. There's always a tension there.

Do you find yourself making conscious decisions of how to design from a Mennonite perspective?

I am drawn to simplicity in design, a more minimal aesthetic. Is that a Mennonite aesthetic, or is it simply my preference? I don't know. I also hold myself apart from the clothing and fashion world in certain ways because there are things I don't like about it. As Mennonites we are taught to be inclusive, empathetic to the poor and the oppressed. Fashion is an invulnerable field that thrives on exclusivity and promoting an image of wealth. Clothing can be a joyful form of self-expression. But like anything else, if there is too much of it, it becomes weighty and distorted.

Also I think the discomfort came from my Mennonite context as well as my feminist values. I don't want to think about how I look all the time. I feel like there is an element of sadness to my experience but also a sense of peace—peace because I am being honest to myself.—*Interview conducted by Kim Stauffer*

The entire interview is posted on MennoniteArtistProject.com

Women reflect on Sister-Link relations

North American and African women share their theological perspectives.

Nina Lanctot, pastor of Florence (Mich.) Church of the Brethren/Mennonite Church, embraced her opportunity for a partnership with an African woman theologian in 2005.

"I thought it would be enlivening, interesting and valuable," she said at a roundtable discussion last year with other participants of the Mennonite Church USA-sponsored Sister-Link program.

The deepening political and economic crisis in the homeland of her Zimbabwean partner Sibusisiwe Ndlovu, however, often made it impossible for the two women to communicate.

> We could have conversations that disrupt colonial patterns.
> —Malinda Berry

"It was harder than I anticipated," Nina says, "and that was frustrating, guilt-producing."

Nevertheless, Nina saw more opportunities than challenges in connecting with the global church body.

"The churches of the South really do have a lot to teach us," she says. "I think some of the things I want to teach my congregation they would hear more readily from someone from another culture than from me."

From 2005 to 2009, a group of North American women each pledged to pray for an African sister and to reach out to build friendship with her across geographic distance and cultural difference.

The eight African participants were the leaders of African Anabaptist Women Theologians, a continental network of women from Mennonite World Conference churches that formed in 2002 to promote women's ministry and theological training. The AAWT group had invited international partners to support them.

Malinda Berry, a theologian who teaches at Goshen (Ind.) College, valued the partnership as a way to live out her identity as a global Christian.

"It also provides moments of transcendence and helps relativize some of the problems I work with with my students," she says. Her partner was Hellen Bradburn from Tanzania.

Berry says she saw powerful potential in the partnership. "We could have conversations that disrupt colonial patterns."

Mary Schertz, a professor at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., describes her participation in the Sister-Link with Kenyan theologian-pastor Rebecca Osiro as "a reparations ethos."

"I feel blessed to have this education, to be in a place where I can do theological reflection and teaching," she says. "It's clear to me that I have opportunities women in Africa have not had. In some ways this is a way to share the blessing, to say, 'I'm privileged and I know it,' and to care about other women in other settings having opportunity to teach, reflect theologically, to express, to write theologically. It has been life-giving in so many ways."

The group of North American women noted the obstacles to good partnerships between themselves and their African sisters. They reflected critically on past partnership models using the writings of AAWT leader Swana Sidonie of Congo and Botswana theologian Musa W. Dube.

Rhoda Keener, executive director of Mennonite Women USA, describes the challenge she faced in the partnership as a North American white woman.

"We want equality, but we don't know how," she says. "Our wealth and white skin feel like blocks."

Linda Gehman Peachey of Mennonite Central Committee, participated in raising scholarship funds for AAWT women studying theology.

"We can't get away from colonialism," she says. "The fact that we in the United States and Canada are providing funds is one dynamic in the partnership. But the decision about who gets the funding is made in Africa, which is one way to address some of the power dynamics."

Keener says that even though we don't know how to cross the cultural divides that separate us, the friendships formed with the women on the committee through this Sister-Link were supportive to her in meaningful ways. "When I was in Congo, the women gathered and prayed for me one evening in French. I don't know French, but I felt God's presence," she says.—*Sylvia E. Shirk*

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–Denise

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CALENDAR

Don't miss **Friendship Community's Harmony Concert** starting at 7p.m. on Nov. 21. The concert will be held at the ***Forest Hills Mennonite Church*** located at 100 Quarry Road in Leola, Pa. This unique event brings together the following musical groups: Forest Hills Men's Ensemble, Landisville Mennonite Church Men's Quartet, Spare Parts, and Friendship Five. The free-will offering will benefit Friendship Community, a non-profit, Christian ministry serving people with developmental disabilities.

A one-day bus tour of literary Manitoba, with writers reading in the very landscapes their work inscribes, is one of the special features of the fifth international conference on **Mennonite/s Writing**, to take place at the ***University of Winnipeg Oct. 1-4***. The conference is free and open to the public. All sessions will take place in the University of Winnipeg's Convocation Hall. For more information, please visit: http://mennonitestudies.uwinnipeg.ca/events/writing/writing-program.php.

WORKERS

Angustia, Moises, was licensed as lead pastor at United Revival Mennonite Church, Brooklyn, N.Y., on June 27.

Christophel, Jared, Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., left in mid Aug. for a one-year Service Adventure term in Phillipi, W.V.

Donelson-Sims, Brandon and Danielle, of Granville Ohio, are beginning a three-year work assignment with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Indonesia. At Satya Wacana Christian University, Brandon will teach English and conflict transformation, and Danielle will teach English literature. Brandon obtained a bachelor's in political science from Marietta College and a master's from Antioch University. Danielle obtained a bachelor's from Marietta College and a master's from the University of Toledo. They attend Columbus Mennonite Church. They participated in an orientation of 50 workers at MCC offices in Akron, Pa., July 7-17.

Gibbs, Stephen, ended a term as lead pastor at Elizabethtown Mennonite Church, Elizabethtown, Pa., on June 1.

Hoover, Glenn, was installed as associate pastor at Martindale Mennonite Church, Martindale, Pa., on June 21.

McCrae, Betsy Headrick, was ordained at Glennon Heights Mennonite Church, Lakewood, Colo., on July 19.

Metzler, Audrey, was licensed as director of ministry development at Community Mennonite Fellowship, Milton, Pa., on Aug. 1.

Miller, Elizabeth, and Neil Richer of Goshen, Ind., are beginning a three-year work assignment with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Colombia. Miller will serve as an Anabaptist identity and history promoter, and Richer will serve as a micro-loan promoter. Miller obtained a bachelor's from Goshen College, and Richer obtained a bachelor's in business management from Greenville College. They attend Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship. They participated in an orientation for 50 workers at MCC offices in Akron, Pa., July 7-17.

Miller, Freeman, ended a term as bishop/overseer for Philadelphia District of Lancaster Conference, Philadelphia, Pa., on June 30.

Miller, L. Joseph, was licensed as chaplain at Cambridge Mennonite Church, Gordonville, Pa., on July 19.

Mumaw, Jeff, was ordained Aug. 16, at Clinton Frame Mennonite, Goshen, Ind. Jeff is Associate Pastor at Clinton Frame.

Reed, Harold, ended a term as chaplain at James Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on June 1.

Roth, Melissa S., was ordained at Mountain Community Mennonite Church, Palmer Lake, Colo., on Aug. 23.

Shertzer, A. Willard, was installed as intentional interim lead pastor at Mount Joy Mennonite Church, Mount Joy, Pa., on May 18.

Thomas, Melvin, was installed as intentional interim pastor at Chestnut Hill Mennonite Church, Columbia, Pa., on Aug. 1.

Wenger, Larry, ended a term as deacon at James Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on June 1.

Zook, Judy, was ordained as associate pastor at New Holland Mennonite Church, New Holland, Pa., on June 7.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Fisher, Shav Daniel, July 20, to Jeff and Davene Huffman Fisher, Harrisonburg, Va.

Gray, Charlotte Olivia, June 4, to David and Ceci Harman Gray, Harrisonburg, Va.

Hershberger, Christian Mitchell, Aug. 2, to Ben and Jessica Sweigart Hershberger, Newton, Kan.

Schoenhals, Heidi Elizabeth, May 14, to Mark and Sarah Hawkins Schoenhals, Harrisonburg, Va.

Stauffer, Eli Colin, July 27, to Joe and Kim Metzler Stauffer, Lancaster, Pa.

Swartzendruber, Nicolas Jhett, Aug. 7, to Troy and Tina Osborn Swartzendruber, Goshen, Ind.

Yoder, Ben Renno, Aug. 11, to Alex and Shannon Lamb Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va.

Zuercher, Lukas Todd, June 28, to Todd and Angela Kratzer Zuercher, Apple Creek, Ohio.

MARRIAGES

Brown/Brown: Aaron and Jenny Brown, Archbold, Ohio, Aug. 15, at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Detweiler/Stoltzfus: Nathan Detweiler, Washington, Iowa, and Karla Stoltzfus, Iowa City, Iowa, Aug. 15, at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City.

Dirks/Hurst: Karl Dirks, Lancaster, Pa., and Christy Hurst, New Holland, Pa., Aug. 22, at the Boxwood Inn, Akron, Pa.

Dundore/Kidwell: Kevin Dundore, Akron, Pa., and Corin Kidwell, Akron, Aug. 8, at Akron Mennonite Church.

Erb/Widmer: Lindsey Erb, Wellman, Iowa, and Jason Widmer, Washington, Iowa, Aug. 1, at the bride's home in Wellman.

Hertzler/Hurst: Alicia Hertzler, Marietta, Pa., and Zachary Hurst, Glenmoore, Pa., Aug. 15, at Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa.

Hochstetler/St. Germain: Joe Hochstetler, Nappanee, Ind., and Amber St. Germain, Goshen, Ind., June 20, at Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Javers/Schrag: Jeremy Javers, Parker, S.D., and Amber Schrag, Marion S.D., Aug. 22 at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

"For the Record" is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. To submit information, log on to www.TheMennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access our online forms. You can also submit information by email, fax or mail:

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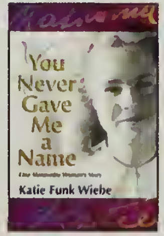
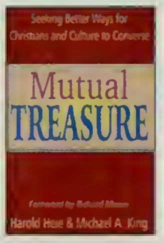


You Never Gave Me a Name: One Mennonite Woman's Story, Katie Funk Wiebe. "I loved this book. This is Katie's life, her name, her harvest of work and discovery." —*Dora Dueck*. 280 p; $15.95

Mutual Treasure: Seeking Better Ways for Christians and Culture to Converse, ed. Harold Heie and Michael A. King. "These contributors link practice with principle creatively. Read and think!" —*Mark Noll*. 208 p; $19.95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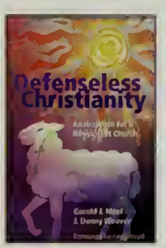

Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church, Gerald J. Mast and J. Denny Weaver. "I hope God uses this book to call us back to the beautifully foolish, enemy-loving, cross-bearing center of our faith." —*Greg Boyd*. 136 p; $12.95

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"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

Kelley/Tutko: Richard Kelley, Gibson City, Ill., and Linda Tutko, Normal, Ill., July 26, at East Bend Mennonite Church, Fisher, Ill.

Koppenhofer/Riegsecker: Krista Koppenhofer, Wauseon, Ohio, and Justin Riegsecker, Ridgeville Corners, Ohio, Aug. 8, at St. James Lutheran Church, Archbold, Ohio.

Lundberg/Widmer: Joshua Lundberg, Iowa City, Iowa, and Jill Widmer, Washington, Iowa, May 30, at Upper Deer Creek Mennonite Church, Wellman, Iowa.

Miller/Tracey: Nat Miller, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Caitlin Tracey, Cedar Falls, Iowa, Aug. 8, at Cedar Falls Mennonite Church.

Nold/Stahl: Carter Nold, S.D., and Jeanie Stahl, Flandreau, S.D., July 31, at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Rufenacht/Ruffer: Justin Rufenacht, Wauseon, Ohio, and Lindsi Ruffer, Stryker, Ohio, Aug. 8, at Pettisville Missionary Church, Wauseon.

Springer/Warner: Tyler Springer, Carlisle, Pa., and Sara Warner, Elkhart, Ind., July 31, at Goshen College Reith Recital Hall, Goshen, Ind.

Stauffer/Widmer: Angela Stauffer, Burlington, Iowa, and Jared Widmer, Washington, Iowa, June 27, at Grace Bible Church, Wever, Iowa.

DEATHS

Helmuth, Lizzie Ann Miller, 96, Sarasota, Fla. and Kokomo, Ind., died Aug. 17. Spouse: Andy Helmuth (deceased). Children: Larry; two grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 21 at Bay Shore Mennonite Church, Sarasota.

Kief, Nellie C. Good, 93, Albany, Ore., died June 26. Spouse: Loren H. Kief (deceased). Parents: Daniel W. and Sarah E. Roth Good. Children: Judy Bacher, Jewell Stanley, Ron, Jim; 12 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 12 at Albany Mennonite Church.

Leatherman, Michael Dean, 31, Pennsburg, Pa., died Aug. 9 of a brain tumor. Spouse: Carmen Ingalls Leatherman. Parents: John Paul and Lena Landis Leatherman. Children: Michael Darren. Funeral: Aug. 14 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Martin, Doris A. Hershey, 65, Gordonville, Pa., died June 27 following a brief illness. Spouse: Wilmer G. Martin. Parents: M. Clair and Anna Mary Hauck Hershey. Children: Rita C. Schwarz, Greta L. Washington; five grandchildren. Funeral: July 1 at Weaverland Mennonite Church, East Earl, Pa.

Miller, Ellen Marie Gardner, 95, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 11. Spouse: Samuel S. Miller (deceased). Parents: Jesse E. and Dora Miller Gardner. Children: Meredith Wittrig, Patricia Nisley, Eleanor Koehler, Samuel W.; 17 grandchildren; 45 great-grandchildren; 11 great-great grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 14 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Miller, W. Ray, 91, Sarasota, Fla., died Aug. 24. Spouse: Dorothea Messick Miller. Parents: William Levi and Jemimah Troyer Miller. Children: Gail, Barbara Miller, Cheryl Eash; five grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 29 at Bayshore Mennonite Church, Sarasota.

Neufeld, Antoinette A. Klassen Philin, 76, Akron, Pa., died July 17. Spouse: Hans Peter Neufeld. Parents: Alexander and Marguerita Klassen Philin. Children: Carla E. Neufeld, Lisa M. Neufeld, Jenny Dominh, Philip M., Aida Amy-Joy Echternach; 14 grandchildren. Funeral: July 21 at Akron Mennonite Church.

Simpson, Elmer A., 86, Rantoul, Ill., died Aug. 18. Spouse: June Ingold Simpson (deceased). Children: Linda Adams, Larry. Funeral: Aug. 21 at Lux Memorial Chapel, Rantoul.

Swartzentruber, Mary Christina Yancey, 94, Lowville, N.Y., died Aug. 26. Spouse: Abner M. Swartzentruber (deceased). Parents: Edward E. and Rosella Zehr Yancey. Children: Marvin E., Dale M., Dawn Lehman, Glenn A.; eight grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 29 at Lowville Mennonite Church.

Stucky, Roland David, 85, Kingsburg, Calif., died Aug. 9. Spouse: Ferne Boucher Stucky. Spouse: Elaine Eymann Stucky (deceased). Parents: John D. and O'Tillie Schrag Stucky. Children: Maureen Sinclair, Patrice Flaming, Scott; six grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 17 at First Mennonite Church, Reedley, Calif.

Whitman, Philip, 88, Vancouver, Wash., died Aug. 16 of a stroke. Spouse: Marilyn Whitman. Parents: Hubert T. and Mabel Whitman. Children: Phyllis Heims, Jack Hal; one grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 21 at Evergreen Memorial Gardens, Vancouver.

Willouer, Mary Kathryn, 76, Souderton, Pa., died Aug. 15. Parents: Howard M. and Maggie L. Moyer Willouer. Funeral: Aug. 19 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Zehr, Ray, 87, Hesston, Kan., died July 9 of pneumonia. Spouse: Lois Nussbaum Zehr. Parents: Peter and Katie Zehr. Children: Nancy Shear, Terry Zehr; five grandchildren. Memorial service: July 13 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

For college students

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Durham Mennonite Church, Durham, N.C., celebrates its ***40th anniversary*** on Saturday, Oct. 24; 1:30-5:30 p.m., and Sunday, Oct. 25 at the 10:30 a.m. worship service. For more information contact pastor@dur-hammennonite.org or Marcia Nice at 919-596-9459. For updates see www.durhammennonite.org.

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'Vengeance is mine' ... or is it?

Gordon Houser

Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.
—Romans 12:19

The depiction of vengeance ("punishment inflicted in retaliation for an injury or offense," according to *Webster's*) permeates our media—movies, TV, books, video games, music—and challenges our Christian faith.

Jesus taught his disciples to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39) and endured shameful torture and death without retaliating against his enemies. The Bible teaches throughout (the above verse is quoting Deuteronomy 32:35) that God is to take vengeance; we are not.

Yet our culture not only opposes this stance but ridicules it. Anyone who turns the other cheek is a wimp. Even some Christian authors say this.

Mennonites in particular emphasize nonretaliation. Practicing this is hard enough. Being surrounded by messages that we should retaliate makes it even harder.

TV cop shows (police procedurals) proliferate so fast it's impossible to keep up. How many CSI shows are there by now?

Many of the best-selling books are whodunits, crime novels. And true-crime books are almost as popular.

Then there are movies, which draw us into their action even more, through sight and sound on a large screen.

All these stories introduce us to characters who experience some injustice. Other characters act to try to find out who did the evil deed and bring some kind of justice. Soon we're not only lamenting the injustice but rooting for those trying to bring justice. And justice means punishment. Soon we're caught up in the story and—inwardly, at least—wanting that evil perpetrator punished.

Where does this powerful impulse come from? Partly from a desire for things to be made right, which is a good impulse. Part of what draws me to read murder mysteries, for example, is that they bring some order to the world, since (usually) the crime is solved.

Our daily lives are often less certain (problems are not always solved) but also less violent. There just aren't enough murders to fill all those storylines on TV. They don't reflect reality.

Consider some movies from the past several months. *Star Trek* sets up a villain out to destroy a planet because his own planet was destroyed. The young Kirk then takes vengeance on this man who killed his father for taking vengeance on those who destroyed his planet.

This circularity of vengeance is played out all over the world and throughout history. It is part of the insidious evil of vengeance that Jesus sought to end.

District 9 (reviewed below), another sci-fi film, takes us in a different direction. Instead of seeking vengeance on aliens who kill humans, we end up rooting for the mistreated aliens and against the human mercenaries trying to kill them.

Then there's Quentin Tarantino, whose film *Inglourious Basterds*, which I haven't seen, has a group of Jews killing Nazis during World War II. All of Tarantino's films, ingenious in their references to other films, deal with vengeance and depict it graphically.

Fortunately there are exceptions. While *Up*, an animated feature for children and adults, contains elements of vengeance, it is dominated by other themes, such as the loss of dreams, grieving, growing up, caring for others.

Another excellent film is *The Hurt Locker*, which is set during the Iraq War but is not about vengeance so much as the psychological effects of war on soldiers. Specifically it shows the addiction to battle that some soldiers experience. The film follows a squad that defuses bombs. One soldier is drawn to this dangerous activity, having defused more than 800 devices, and can't give it up.

Perhaps vengeance is a drug of sorts, one we imbibe regularly through the media. Resisting its influence is a huge task. TM

The reviews below are available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

FILMS

Describing **Silent Light** (NR) as slow is an understatement. However, the surreal ending makes it worth it, as do the nonprofessional actors in lead roles and as extras. Set in a Prussian Mennonite community in Northern Mexico, the film follows a Mennonite farmer who is having an affair with another Mennonite woman. Director Carlos Reygadas plays deftly with one's senses and understanding of time throughout the 145-minute film.—*Anna Groff*

District 9 (R) is a sci-fi film that also addresses the subject of prejudice. Set in South Africa, where a group of stranded aliens is placed in a shantytown, the film uses a documentary style that's not consistent. Though full of logical holes, this unique film raises important questions about how we deal with the stranger.—*gh*

BOOKS

The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus by Dale C. Allison Jr. (Eerdmans, 2009, $16) describes Jesus scholar Allison's "personal testimony to doubt seeking understanding." He shows the discord among the experts and what a large role personal agendas play in their reconstruction of the historical Jesus. Allison asks how much history is in the Gospels and how much history does Christian theology require there to be.

Looking Before and After: Testimony and the Christian Life by Alan Jacobs (Eerdmans, 2009, $14) argues that we need "better and more responsible and more coherent personal stories." Jacobs encourages us to ask how our lives can be meaningful in a Christian sense. Testimony has become a lost art that needs to be recovered.

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Members in worship: Dawn Ranck

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Your work may be chosen for future publication in *The Mennonite*. For photo categories and submission instructions, go to **www.TheMennonite.org**

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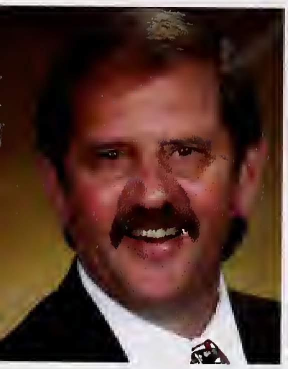

Everett J. Thomas

The dangers of dialogue

When we have fights about various matters in the church, the expectation is that we will self-mediate our way to resolution through dialogue. But the problem is that we do not agree on the meaning of dialogue.

In a remarkable column that drew no reader responses, Mennonite Church USA executive director James Schrag pointed out the four ways we define dialogue (June 2). This delineation is worth repeating. Here are the definitions of "dialogue" in first-person language:

- Dialogue is a sign that we have weak convictions about matters that I believe are nonnegotiable.
- Dialogue is a means for me to promote my point of view to you.
- Dialogue is what we do to stay in fellowship—to "keep the peace"—but don't expect me to change my mind.
- Dialogue is how we are mutually accountable; through God's Spirit it may lead me to change my mind.

Genuine dialogue may lead us to places we do not now want to go.

I have found this taxonomy helpful as readers press me on the moratorium we've had in place since 2000: We do not publish letters and articles that address our church's teaching position on sexuality. The moratorium was put in place by former editor J. Lorne Peachey; I have continued it for nearly nine years.

We believe Mennonite Church USA needs to have meaningful dialogue about the matter. But polarizing letters on our pages do not foster appropriate dialogue. They are serial monologues.

Our moratorium, however, is misunderstood on both sides of the divide.

"I ... see *The Mennonite*'s moratorium as an attempt to stop the constituency from having anything printed that is against the homosexual lifestyle," said one reader in a letter we published on Aug. 18.

Actually, a major reason for the moratorium was the opposite of this. Most of the letters we published in 1999 and 2000 were calling for the church to change its statements on human sexuality. The letters were so distressing to so many people that people quit reading. From 1998 until 2000, circulation fell from 22,000 to 16,000.

During my first years as editor, many people told me that they dropped their subscriptions "because of all the letters on homosexuality."

This demonstrated to us that the forum function of this magazine, now codified in Mennonite Church USA bylaws, has its limits. So we have the moratorium.

"But Everett," wrote Helen Lapp, a long time church leader from Harleysville, Pa., "to cut off all dialogue on any subject does not seem to serve the church well either."

I agree—if we can agree on what dialogue is. But we're pretty sure dialogue is not people spraying verbal toxins on each other in the letters section of this magazine.

"Could *The Mennonite* set a standard," Helen continued in a letter too long for Readers Say, "and print only letters with a different tone of, 'This is how I see it' or, 'This is how we see it,' with the group identified? That could then be true dialogue, as those with differing views try to learn from each other."

Each time our board of directors meets, we discuss the moratorium. It will be on our agenda next week when we gather at the all-boards meeting Sept. 24-26. We are interested in hearing from you on this matter.

It may be possible for us again to publish articles and letters on this divisive subject. Now, nearly nine years later, we may be more capable of addressing each other with a different tone. But to do so would require clear understandings about the purpose: to help the church dialogue.

Doing so is dangerous, however, because when we dialogue with each other in a way that has integrity, God's Spirit may move in our minds and hearts. Regardless which side of a divide, genuine dialogue can be dangerous because it may lead us to places we do not now want to go.—*ejt*

This editorial is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

Note: The next issue of *The Mennonite* will be dated Oct. 6.

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Words of encouragement extend witness

Ron Byler is interim executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you.—Philippians 1:3

There are moments in our lives that leave indelible marks on us. And there are people in those moments whose encouraging words shape us far beyond what we could imagine.

Esther was one of those people for me. A quiet, respected leader in my home congregation, Esther took on countless congregational tasks, many often unseen by other members. Her words, at a time when I was searching to understand what it means to follow Jesus, had a profound impact on my call to ministry in the church.

Esther's words made a difference.

Growing up in the Neffsville congregation in Lancaster, Pa., I felt affirmation from my congregation. Young people regularly participated in worship, and the church gave priority to providing leadership for youth groups and youth events.

During my early high school years, I was one of those students who felt more comfortable in the background. But in my junior year, I discovered drama and had the lead role in the junior class school play. I enjoyed theater and my experiences on stage. Even more importantly, theater gave me opportunities for new relationships and led me to feel greater acceptance of my peers.

About that time Esther agreed to lead our congregation's Christmas program, which featured our children and youth. That year the pageant included long dramatic segments, and Esther asked me to take the lead role. Knowing I could act, Esther asked me to use my newly found talents for the good of our congregation.

I remember little about that particular Christmas pageant at church. What I do remember is the letter Esther sent me afterward—a letter I still have in my possession. In it, Esther encouraged me, actually admonished me, to use my gifts for the building up of the church.

For years now I have linked that single experience, that one act of affirmation, with my strong commitment to use my gifts and skills to nurture the church and God's people. That letter has served as a source for my personal ministry.

You know Esthers. Many of you have experienced Esthers in your own lives and in your own churches. These folks have encouraged you to use your gifts for God's purposes. These folks send you notes of encouragement or go out of their way to tell you they are praying for you and are supporting you as you follow God's call.

A few words can make a lifetime of difference.

The Apostle Paul puts it this way to the church at Philippi when he gives them a double blessing of grace and peace: "I thank God for you every time I remember you. … The one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion. … And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow" (Philippians 1:3, 6, 9).

In Mennonite Church USA, one of our four missional church priorities is leadership development—the calling, training and nurturing of all our members, including our youth, to use their leadership gifts to extend God's witness in the world.

I thank God for Esther, for Paul and for the many others like them in our congregations and in the broader church. May their affirmation guide us to offer words of encouragement to others.

Just a few words can make a lifetime of difference. TM

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

TheMennonite

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Cover: 2007 Masonville Mennonite Youth (Washington Boro, PA) Krista Brenneman and Sarah Kohler.
Photo by Rhoda Shirk, TM photo contest entry

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Grace and beauty in retirement

The Sept. 15 issue of *The Mennonite* ("Out of the Rocking Chair") is of great interest to me for two reasons. First, I am that age called "retirement." Second, I am president of the board for Hope Village in Canby Ore., a Mennonite-formed retirement community. To discover this age of life knowing purpose and experiencing dignity is a gift we all want to enjoy and give others as well.

One of the tasks of this time of life revolves around the discernment of when and how to pass on the baton, hold the torch and pass on the torch to others. Can we help each other find this grace and beauty of life as well?—*Pat Hershberger, Woodburn, Ore.*

Lingering grief for Barry Bartel

Though time has lapsed since the article "Bethel Board Ousts Bartel" (Sept. 1), I continue to be weighted by the lingering grief for yet another wounded person and what appears to be unbridled leadership. It seems that one does not need to dig very deeply into many churches and parachurch organizations to find a cache of buried vision, confused sense of call and discarded giftedness that, at a time of wholeness and clarity, had been laid on the altar for God's usefulness in the kingdom only to be trampled, discredited and left abandoned.

The use of "ousts" in the title looms in stark contrast to the other titles suggesting healing, growth, sacrifice, acceptance and trust. Why was this man's deposition, which appears to have been by a faulty, ungraceful, unaccountable process, highlighted across the denomination? Its proclamation paints no picture of a caring community where there is space for this man's dignity or profession. Have the church and its extensions adapted a mentality that is immune from Christian procedure embracing respect, nurture and accountability? Is Christlike behavior only an ideal that we tout, assuming, in the realities of life and dealing with people, it is impractical and unnecessary? *—Doris Diener, Sarasota, Fla.*

We need forbearance with each other

I appreciated Gordon Houser's Aug. 18 editorial on "Unromantic Unity." It makes some important points. But I think there is yet one thing necessary for unity, and that is to know ourselves.

I have a brother who often wants to be helpful. But if I ask for too much he becomes irritated and resentful. He needs to know himself and not overcommit. I need to know him and not ask too much. I wonder if this isn't also true in our congregations. We need to know what is beyond our capacity to tolerate and let each other know this. We also need to know each other well enough to know what is asking too much of others. As we discuss hard issues, let's try to be honest about our ability to tolerate difference and admit when we're starting to feel threatened or resentful. Let's recognize that in some cases, time is needed in order for us to fully submit ourselves to God's transformation. In that case our friends may need to submit themselves to God to obtain the forbearance necessary to be patient with us.—*Eileen Metzger, Rochester, N.Y.*

Let go of martyr complex

I recently read Gerald Schlabach's explanation in *Commonweal* of some "non-Roman reasons" for becoming what he calls a "Mennonite Catholic." One of Schlabach's points that I found most compelling was his citation of the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." This he applies to a context of interchurch reconciliation and healing from past persecution. He adds the disclaimer that he is not calling for a mass conversion to Catholicism, and neither am I. But what I would like to call for is an end to frameworks of Mennonite identity that demonize our brothers and sisters in Christ's body. When Catholics and Lutherans request forgiveness for a history of persecution and/or condemnation of Anabaptists, it is our Christian duty to offer that forgiveness—perhaps by letting go of the collective martyr complex that has long been a major component of our self-perception as Mennonites. Doing so would strengthen, not compromise, our Mennonite heritage, because to act consistently with our much-proclaimed values means accepting the hands of reconciliation that have been extended to us. Only then can we truly be a peace church.—*Julia Smucker, Orodara, Burkina Faso*

IN THIS ISSUE

Mennonite Youth Fellowship (MYF) is the focus of our feature section in this issue. Bob Yoder (page 8) reports on a national study on youth and religion that suggests the best way to get youth more involved in their faith communities is for parents to get serious about their own involvements. Sallie Reed (page 16) says, "A missional youth ministry also requires adult leaders willing to be authentic and vulnerable." Because our board of directors participated in the Sept. 24-25 all-boards meeting in Kansas City, Mo., *Mennonite Weekly Review* editor Paul Schrag agreed to share his news story about that event with us (page 19). On the editorial page (page 32), assistant editor Anna Groff reminds us of an important issue needing our attention: human trafficking.—*Editor*

George Carlin never knew Jesus

It has been over a year since the passing of George Carlin. His "A Place for My Stuff" monologue is a classic indictment on American materialism. Yet he made us laugh at ourselves.

Carlin was a religion basher. (I think Jesus is too.) Carlin saw the church as a compassionless institution. Its emphasis on rules and dogma over grace and personal relationship with Jesus Christ caused Carlin to say in affect, "No thanks, I can be self-centered on my own."

Tragically, Carlin never met the personal Jesus I know. By its very definition, the institutional church can never be personal. But Jesus is. The church is personal when it is full of individuals who have an active, daily relationship with Jesus Christ—welcome as a drink of cold water on a hot summer day.

When we demonstrate a cultivated relationship with Christ to the world, people will gravitate toward the grace of Christ. How may we translate that personal relationship and go public? I'm not talking about tie-dyed T-shirts proclaiming, Jesus is Lord, or catchy, Christianese bumper stickers. We can dress right, talk right, behave right and give right, as do Mormons and Muslims. Yet it is only the love and grace of Jesus living in and through us that will stand out among all other forms of behavior. Nothing else matters, including time, something George Carlin no longer has. —*Doug Yoder, Carlisle, Ind.*

Opportunity for true dialogue was impeded

Mennonite USA Convention 2009 had many highlights—great organization, exciting speakers, challenging seminars. Unfortunately, the delegate sessions seemed to waste much of the considerable time and talents of the delegates.

An opportunity for true dialogue was impeded by a program that tightly orchestrated both table discussions and sharing with the entire delegate assembly. Time slots for sharing with the assembly were restricted to one minute per person—and sometimes only 30 seconds.

The time mismanagement reached its climax on Saturday afternoon, July 4, when many delegates wanted to share their views on the resolution concerning human sexuality. So little time was allotted for discussion that only about one-third of the people standing in line to speak had a chance to say anything. The time to adjourn was fast approaching, so the delegates were asked to vote, to cut off discussion and vote on the resolution, which they did.

More time mismanagement was evident when the Executive Board then went 30 minutes over the scheduled time for adjournment with congratulations of its old and new officers. This demonstrated unbelievable disrespect for the "grass-roots" delegates.

A true moment of irony was the passing of the "following Christ" resolution, that called for "ongoing dialogue." This controversial resolution was an opportunity for "agreeing and disagreeing in love." The schedule suppressed the very dialogue for which the resolution called.

What message does this lack of discussion send? How do we as a community intend to practice "following Christ and growing together even in conflict"?—*Ruth Anne Abraham, Austin, Texas*

Consolidate publications?

We do appreciate *The Mennonite* and its variety of articles, Readers Say and For the Record at the back of each issue. And we're hoping that someday it may be possible to continue publication without asking for contributions beyond the cost of subscription.

We've noted that *OurFaith Digest* has been discontinued and have wondered whether consolidation of some of our publications might become necessary or possible. It's important to have denominational publications, but we can't subscribe to and support all of them. Although we're retired we don't have time to read all of them anyway.—*David and LouAnn Kanagay, Archbold, Ohio*

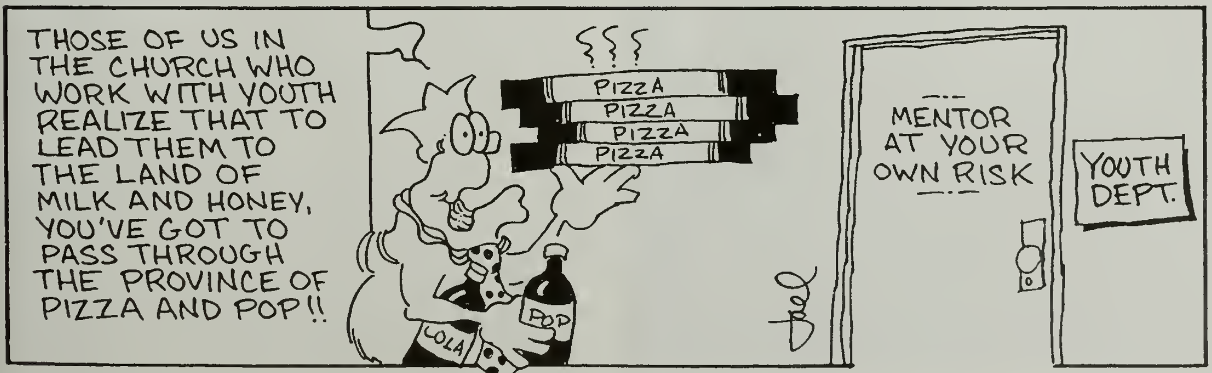
ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Regarding Mennonite Youth Fellowship (MYF): (94 votes)

- ○ My experience was good (81%)
- ○ My experience was bad (3%)
- ○ I didn't experience MYF (12%)
- ○ What's MYF? (4%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**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IN BRIEF

Green economy outperforms

Despite the recession, the green economy is outperforming the rest of the global economy, according to two new reports. New energy investment in renewable sources in 2008 surpassed worldwide investment in fossil fuel power for the first time, says a report released by the United Nations in June. In the United States, green jobs grew more than twice as fast as the overall job market between 1998 and 2007, and the green economy has suffered fewer setbacks than the economy as a whole, according to data released by the Pew Charitable Trusts.—*Yes!* Magazine

Facebook cash flow positive

Facebook reported that 50 million people signed up to its service since July, taking the total number to 300 million. The social-networking Web site has also become cash flow positive, with enough revenue to cover its operations and capital spending.
—*The Economist*

Intermenno 'trainee' program to end

PITTSBURGH, Pa.—The Intermenno Trainee Program, a North American-European exchange program, will end in August 2010, with the 2009-2010 trainee group as the final group.

An Aug. 28 letter from Johannes van der Meer of Intermenno Netherlands and Johannes Neufeld of Intermenno Germany/Switzerland reads, "It has become increasingly difficult to keep the program operating" and provided the following reasons for closing: Fewer applications for the program have been received; the mentality of some participants has also changed, and the employers have increasingly more complaints about trainees' efforts; the Internet, which provides trainees with more communication with home, has proved detrimental for some participants; the lack of representatives to carry out promotional work in North America; and the governments of the participating countries that have made the program logistics difficult through expensive work and residence permits and restrictions on these permits.—*Anna Groff*

The Corinthian Plan in *Christian Century*

NEWTON, Kan., and ELKHART, Ind.—The Corinthian Plan, the Mennonite Church USA health-care plan, is featured in the Sept. 22 issue of *Christian Century*. The biweekly magazine carries staff writer Amy Frykholm's four-page article titled "Health-care Option: A Mennonite Plan for Mutual Aid." Frykholm interviewed Keith Harder, the denomination's health-care access project director. She also contacted a handful of Mennonite pastors, including Juanita Nuñez, moderator of Iglesia Menonita Hispana. She interviewed Marco Guete, conference minister of Southeast Mennonite Conference, and Timothy Jost, who crafted the resolution the Delegate Assembly passed in July supporting legislation that would extend health-care coverage to all Americans.
—*Mennonite Church USA*

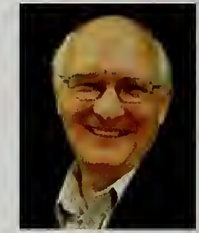
Ryan Miller

French-U.S. exchange leads to two-way learning

Margax Woehrle (left) and Sarah Ostertag from France, visiting Indiana through a partnership among French and U.S. organizations, sort books at the Boys and Girls Club of Goshen, Ind.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

MC Canada general secretary to retire

WINNIPEG, Man.—Robert J. Suderman, general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, on Aug. 28 informed the General Board Executive of his intention to retire not later than Aug. 31, 2010. Suderman officially began in the position on Dec. 1, 2005, after having most recently served as executive secretary of MC Canada Witness. By the time he retires in 2010, Suderman will have spent 42 years in church ministry. Suderman has been involved in the international church and has been an important voice in ecumenical circles through MC Canada's membership in the Canadian Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.—*MC Canada*



Robert Suderman

New interchurch associate brings fresh voice

NEWTON, Kan.—Joanna Shenk, a 25-year-old Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary graduate, began her full-time position Aug. 3 with Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership as associate for interchurch relations and communications. In her first communications project, she is coordinating the collection of data for an audit of women in leadership within Mennonite Church USA. In her Interchurch Relations work, one of her projects is to engage with intentional communities and other emerging churches across the country. These groups want to be in relationship with Mennonites due to their interest in Anabaptist-Mennonite theology and ethics but not necessarily join a denominational structure.—*Mennonite Church USA*

EMM anticipates 2010 budget reduction

SALUNGA, Pa.—Eastern Mennonite Missions anticipates an overall budget reduction of 15 percent in 2010—an $8.1 million budget down from the 2009 budget of $9.6 million. Nearly equal declines in all of Eastern Mennonite Missions' major streams of funding have necessitated the planned reduction. The declining income trends for 2010 may be short-term, resulting from the economic recession, or the decline may be part of a longer-term shift related to decreasing size of constituency and/or diminished vision for sending

Kevin Miller

th-graders at Bethany dedicate school's peace pole
th-graders at Bethany Christian Schools, Goshen, Ind, Ryan stland (left) of Goshen, and Jack Erlacher of Bristol, Ind., dicate the school's peace pole on International Peace Day, pt. 21, with their class.—*Bethany Christian Schools*

missionaries to other nations. EMM leadership believes that multiple factors are involved.

The missionary support teams of outgoing personnel face challenges abroad as well as at home, as the dollar weakens and inflation rates in some countries rise quickly. General contributions to EMM have declined more rapidly during the recession. EMM is encouraged by the number of highly qualified new personnel who are preparing to serve and by the growing vision for outreach among many partner congregations.—*EMM*

MWC elects first treasurer from the South

ASUNCIÓN, Paraguay—Paul Quiring from the United States has wrapped up his 11-year tenure in the position of Mennonite World Conference treasurer. Ernst Bergen became the first MWC treasurer from the South at the close of the 2009 MWC Assembly in Paraguay. In his mid-40s, Bergen has served in Paraguay's presidential cabinet and is now an advisor to a variety of Paraguayan businesses. One of Bergen's personal projects is "Good Governance," which offers chaplaincy services to Paraguayans in public office.—*MWC*

Floods in Burkina Faso destroy homes

AKRON, Pa.—The rainstorm that dropped 12 inches of water in 12 hours caused widespread flooding throughout the capital city of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on Sept. 1. Residents were shocked as water overflowed the city reservoir and spillways and swept away cars, bridges and homes. As a result, the Office for Development Projects, the relief and development arm of the Federation of Evangelical Churches and Missions in Burkina Faso and a longtime MCC partner, has asked MCC for financial assistance. The Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso is a participating church in ODE. MCC has pledged $20,000 and is accepting additional donations.—*MCC*

Communal forest in Colombia destroyed

LAS PAVAS, Colombia—On Aug. 21, members of Christian Peacemaker Teams Laura Ciaghi, Chris Knestrick and Eloy García visited the displaced community of Las Pavas and viewed firsthand the ongoing destruction of the communal forest once used for wood gathering, hunting and fishing. Teams of campesino contract employees from other communities work swiftly, cutting huge old-growth trees with chain saws and clearing paths for bulldozers with the plan to plant the cleared land with oil palm, which manufacturers will convert into agrofuels used in the global north. A popular refrain among social activists is: "Palm oil trees filling gas tanks in the north and displacing communities in the south."—*CPT*

Documentary depicts ex-offender stigmas

HARRISONBURG, Va.—The new documentary from Third Way Media, "Long Road Back: Ex-Offenders' Struggle for Acceptance," begins airing Oct. 4 on NBC-TV and will continue through Nov. 29 at the discretion of local stations (check local listings). It features ex-offenders and the stigmas they face.

"As Third Way Media worked on earlier documentaries on chemical addictions and mental illness, we realized that many people dealing with addiction have also spent time incarcerated," says Burton Buller, producer. The program was produced by Third Way Media (formerly Mennonite Media and a division of Mennonite Mission Network) in conjunction with Buller Films and Odyssey Networks.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Flatlander Bike Ride raises $6,500 for MCC

NEWTON, Kan.—One-hundred forty-nine bicyclists participated in this year's Mennonite Central Committee Flatlander Bike Ride through the Newton countryside on Sept. 19. Participants raised approximately $6,500 to benefit the work of MCC in Tierralta, Colombia. MCC will use the money raised by this ride to build simple but efficient and sustainable water systems for displaced families.—*MCC*

—compiled by Anna Groff

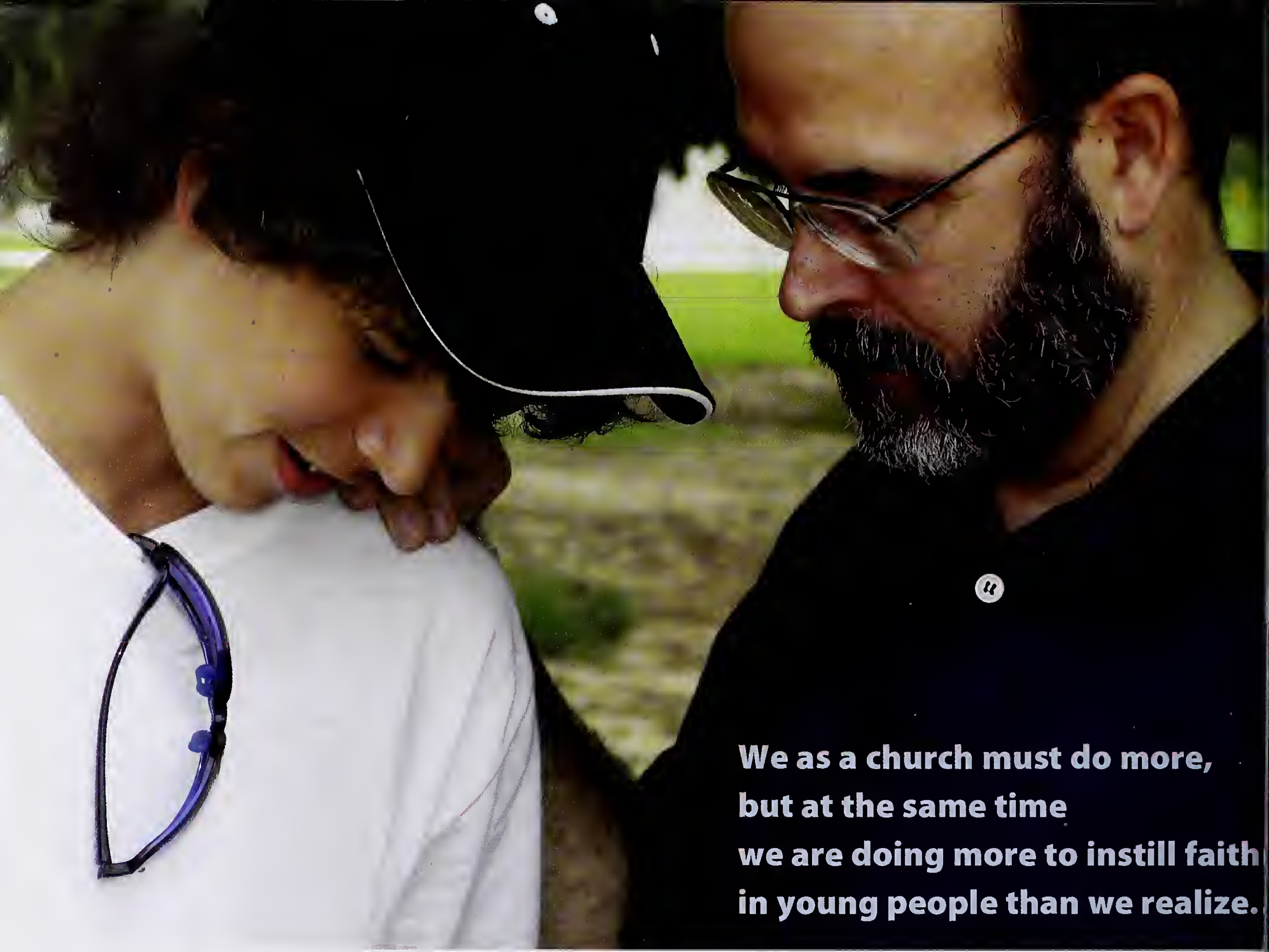
IN BRIEF

Goshen College responds to H1N1

Goshen (Ind.) College is responding to several suspected cases of the flu. The Student Health and Wellness Center reports that as of Sept. 10 some students have presented symptoms of influenza, and on the advisement of the Elkhart County Health Department these cases are being treated as the H1N1 flu, although they have not been confirmed. The college is working closely with the Elkhart County Health Department to monitor the situation and possible impacts. *—Goshen College*

Quickest-ever DVD on Anabaptists

To increase understanding of Anabaptist values, MHS Alliance has published two companion resources: a booklet, "A Quick Guide to Anabaptist Values for MHS Alliance Organizations," written by Emerson L. Lesher and John D. Roth, and "The Quickest Ever DVD Guide to Anabaptists & Their Values," written and produced by Joel Kauffmann. The video is available at www.mhsonline.org and the DVD and booklet can be ordered by emailing Deloris@mhsonline.org.—*MHS Alliance*



We as a church must do more, but at the same time we are doing more to instill faith in young people than we realize.

The implications of Soul Searching *for Mennonite youth ministry*

Nurturing the faith

by Bob Yoder

Do you find yourself agreeing or disagreeing with these statements: "The youth today are just so different from previous generations" and, "Doing youth ministry in a postmodern era calls for radically different approaches"? Or do you simply feel out of touch with young people and dare not venture an answer? A deeper question undergirds these issues: How will we nurture the Christian faith of young people both now and in the future?

In the past several years as I have served in conference youth ministry and taught college youth ministry courses, I have been surprised by what all the term "youth ministry" conjures up in people's minds—Wednesday night Bible studies, conventions, fun, service trips. These certainly can be activities that help shape the faith of adolescents, but do they adequately entail what is needed to pass on the Christian faith? We as a church must do more, but at the same time we are doing more to instill faith in young people than we realize. What will guide us in the evaluation of our efforts? Where will we look for clues?

The single most important influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents.

# of Mennonite youth

NSYR and *Soul Searching*: One book I have reflected on is *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* by principal investigator Christian Smith, published in January 2005. It shares findings from the National Study of Youth and Religion, a comprehensive sociological research project conducted at the University of North Carolina that began in 2001. This project's purpose is to research the shape and influence of religion and spirituality in the lives of American adolescents; to identify effective practices in the religious, moral and social formation of the lives of youth; to describe the extent and perceived effectiveness of the programs and opportunities that religious communities offer their youth; and to foster an informed national discussion about the influence of religion in youth's lives in order to encourage sustained reflection about and rethinking of our cultural and institutional practices with regard to youth and religion. The conclusions in this book offer both challenge and hope.

First, they discovered that religion is a significant presence in the lives of many U.S. teens today, and in fact most teenagers generally feel positive toward religion and the institutional church. However, religion operates in a weak social structural position compared with other activities and organizations that lay claim to their time, so religion is simply not a big deal to them. Furthermore, the spiritual and religious understanding among teens is weak, and for the most part they are inarticulate about their faith beliefs.

Second, supply and demand matters to the spiritual lives of teenagers. The greater the availability of religiously grounded relationships, activities, programs, opportunities and challenges for teens, the more likely they are to be religiously engaged and invested. In other words, "congregations [conferences, denominations] that prioritize youth ministry and support for their parents, invest in trained and skilled youth group leaders and make serious efforts to engage and teach adolescents seem much more likely to draw youth into their religious lives."

Third, this study concluded that teenagers tend to espouse a religious outlook that is distinct and different from traditional faith commitments of most U.S. religious traditions. This can be described as "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD)," which is "(1) A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life. (2) God wants people to be good, nice and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions. (3) The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself. (4) God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem. (5) Good people go to heaven when they die."

This third point, however, is directly connected to the fourth. The single most important influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents. In fact, most American teenagers follow in their parents' footsteps when it comes to religion, and thereby teenage religiosity is extraordinarily conventional. In other words, the "youth culture" described in *Soul Searching* suggests that the beliefs and practices of youth are really a mirror image of their parents' beliefs and practices. Perhaps the generations really are not that different, even though it may appear that way on the surface at times.

The finding that parents are the number one influencers of the faith of young people has been documented in other studies over the past few decades. Yet this leaves me wondering if and how we as a church support and nurture the parent-teen relationship in our youth ministry programs and activities. Will we be serious about nurturing the faith of our young people through relationships already proven to be extremely influential? I am not suggesting that other adults in the church do not play significant roles in the faith formation of adolescents, but why isn't "strengthening parent-teen relationships" as common to "youth ministry" as other activities?

Furthermore, this study leaves me troubled by

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the religious outlook of MTD. There will not be youth who consciously say, "I believe in MTD," but if young people are mirrors to their parents, then what are we teaching our adults in the church? Are we content to allow a human-centered theology that only calls out to God when we feel we need God to perpetuate itself across generations? Our inability to articulate faith understandings will only result in a heightened sense of American individualism, particularly for Mennonites who value community and a Christ-centered faith.

I also glean much hope from *Soul Searching*. One is that youth are getting it; they pick up and embody what is modeled by their parents and other adults. Young people are not a "strange breed" we need to dissect and study in order to fully understand. They value adult relationships and learn from them. If we are able to be authentic and appropriately transparent with them about our lives and our faith, then they will get it. The challenge for adults, however, is to engage in spiritual practices that will nurture their own spiritual formation and growth. In the midst of our busy schedules, are we willing to do that? Are we going to step up and be the spiritual mentors that our youth need?

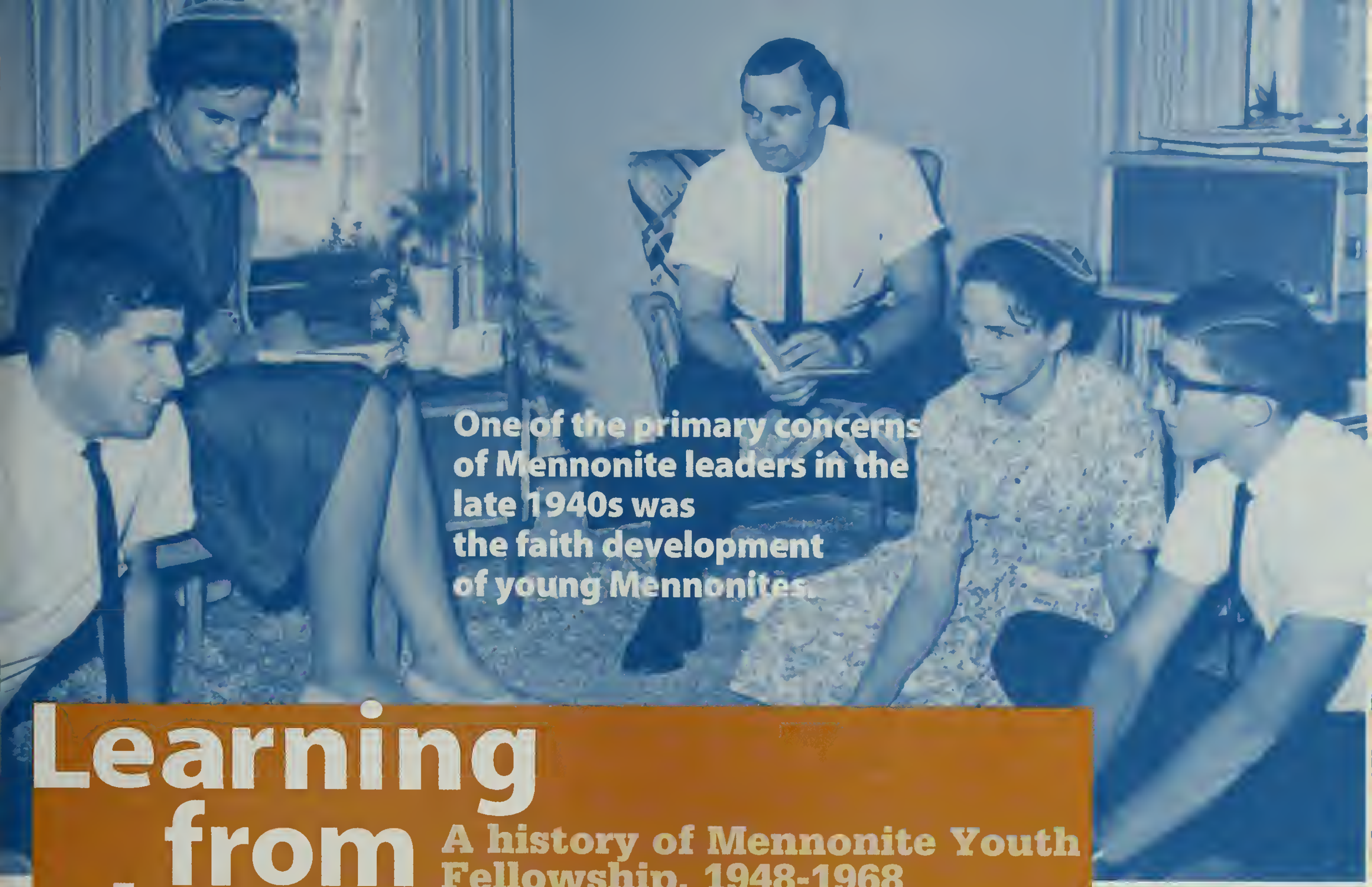
A challenge for the church today is to help all ages actively walk the faith that Christ calls us to.

A second hope from this study is that highly religious teenagers appear to be doing much better in life than less religious teenagers in regard to certain life outcomes such as risk behaviors (i.e. drug and alcohol abuse, cigarette smoking), suspensions from school, relationships with parents, sexual activity, emotional well-being, attitudes about life, moral compassion and reasoning, and community participation. In other words, an active highly involved faith does make a difference in lives of young people.

A final hope I glean stems from a suggestion of theirs: "The best way to get most youth more involved in and serious about their faith communities is to get their parents more involved in and serious about their faith communities." This fits well with Mennonites' understanding of discipleship. If we engage outreach and evangelism seriously, then we will strive to nurture the faith of whole families and not be content with reaching only certain individuals. A challenge for the church today is to help all ages actively walk the faith that Christ calls us to.

Relationships with adults other than parents are also essential, particularly for those who experience strained relationships with their parents or whose parents are deceased. Again this connects with Mennonites' historical approach of passing on the faith through an intergenerational community. When I consider youth ministry, this is what comes to my mind, not highly programmatic events, particularly since I am a product of small churches. I am a committed Christian and an ordained pastor in Mennonite Church USA not because of successful youth activities, though they had their proper role and function, but ultimately because of the Spirit's movement in me and through the lives of Mom, Dad, Uncle Paul, Aunt Doris, Louise, Lynn, Don, Ruth, Roman, Ken and others.

Bob Yoder is director of youth ministry at Goshen (Ind.) College.



1964 Life Team members: Denton Wyse, Pat Hostetter, John Wengerd, Susan Yoder, and Richard Meyers.

> One of the primary concerns of Mennonite leaders in the late 1940s was the faith development of young Mennonites.

Learning from the past

A history of Mennonite Youth Fellowship, 1948-1968

by Jonny Gerig Meyer

Growing up in a Mennonite church, I was active in my congregation's Mennonite Youth Fellowship group. While we regularly attended biennial Mennonite Youth conventions and occasionally met with other local MYF groups for service projects or social gatherings, our MYF was essentially a Sunday school class for high-school-age youth. Our adult MYF sponsors provided leadership and offered a mix of both social activities and more focused faith formation and outreach opportunities. However, we had no idea of the depth of history behind the term "Mennonite Youth Fellowship."

While MYF has come to refer to any Mennonite youth group, its history stems from the churchwide MYF organization that operated from 1948 to 1968. As I researched its history and development, many people expressed surprise that a national Mennonite youth organization ever existed. Understanding this history—both MYF's original goals and the reasons it was later dissolved—helps us better evaluate our contemporary structures for youth leadership development and faith formation.

The origins and early life of MYF: Like many other Mennonite institutions and organizations of the 20th century, MYF was a product of the postwar 1940s. One of the primary concerns of Mennonite leaders in the late 1940s was the faith development of young Mennonites. Mennonite youth were increasingly being exposed to a developing high school "youth culture" that delayed entry into social roles of adulthood and separated youth from adult care and guidance during their early teens. This development of youth culture withdrew youth from significant social roles both in secular society and within the church.

A variety of factors—notably a concern for maintaining distinctive Mennonite principles in the face of cultural assimilation, especially among youth; a period of institution-building within the Mennonite church; and the development of high school youth culture that withdrew Mennonite young people from active church involvement—combined with the apparent success of other national youth ministry organizations, such as Young Life (1941) and Youth for Christ (1944) to convince leaders of the (Old) Mennonite Church that their youth needed a program targeted specifi-

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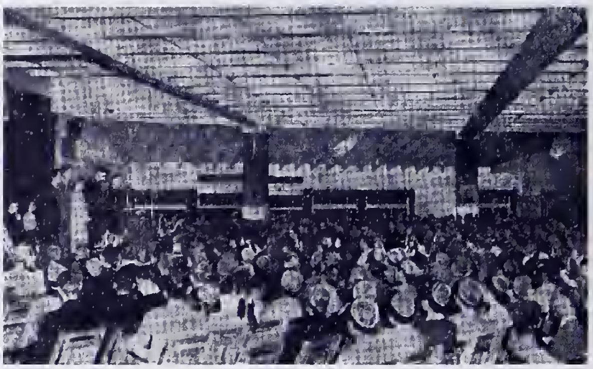


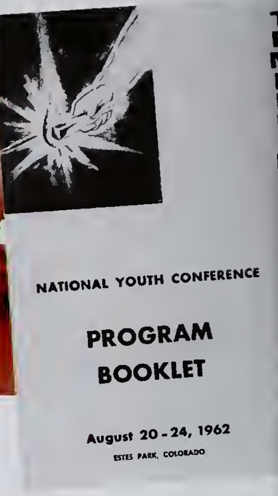
Hershberger photo provided

At the first Mennonite Youth Fellowship meeting in 1948, the group elected officers (from left on the platform) Richard Detweiler, Edgar Metzler, Ada Schrock and Gerald Studer. Paul Erb, the group's sponsor, is at the microphone.

ALL OF LIFE FOR CHRIST

Photo provided

A Mennonite Youth Fellowship meeting in 1958



NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE

PROGRAM
BOOKLET

August 20 - 24, 1962
ESTES PARK, COLORADO

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cally to them in order to strengthen their Mennonite faith and their allegiance to the church.

In May 1947, Paul Erb—at that time secretary of Young People's Activities on the Mennonite Commission for Christian Education and Young People's Work (MCCE) as well as editor of the Mennonite publication *Gospel Herald*—presented his idea for a Mennonite youth program. He envisioned a program that would support existing youth activities organized by congregations on the local level but also provide a network for churchwide coordination and communication. By facilitating churchwide fellowship among youth groups through annual gatherings, Erb hoped to encourage youth by cultivating a sense of belonging—that rural youth groups were no longer isolated and could continue to be uniquely Mennonite in a non-Mennonite society.

The 1950s and early 1960s were a time of growth, challenges and changes for churchwide MYF.

The Mennonite Church approved Erb's proposal in August 1947, and the first annual churchwide MYF meeting took place at Mackinaw Dells near Eureka, Ill., June 11-12, 1948. The membership of MYF consisted of Mennonite youth groups that chose to affiliate with the churchwide MYF and paid a yearly membership fee (initially $5), with an additional suggested annual donation rate based on the total MYF budget. Each affiliating group could send one voting delegate to MYF annual meetings. The delegate body elected an executive committee consisting of president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. The executive committee then appointed a young person as secretary in each of three program areas of MYF: Faith and Practice (later shortened to Faith), Fellowship and Extension (later changed to Service).

In its first decade of existence, a main focus of the churchwide MYF was to provide each MYF unit with monthly program materials, including suggestions for activities related to the three areas of MYF. MYF Cabinet members wrote the monthly releases and emphasized various aspects of youth life: nonresistance, boy-girl relationships, nonconformity, fine arts, youth and Christian citizenship, and summer recreation. These releases continued to function as one of the most important activities of churchwide MYF and constituted a large part of its direct involvement in local MYF units.

The 1950s and early 1960s were a time of growth, challenges and changes for churchwide MYF. After 1955, monthly releases were discontinued in favor of publishing volumes of Youth Program Ideas, which were followed by a revised MYF Manual and a songbook titled *Singing Together*. By that time, attendance at the annual MYF meetings had topped 1,000.

To help manage the increased workload caused by this growth in MYF publications and attendance, the MCCE and the Mennonite Relief and Service Commission cooperated to hire H. Eugene Herr as the first full-time youth field worker in 1958. Herr organized annual meetings, communicated with local youth groups and interacted with non-Mennonite youth program leaders to obtain new ideas for MYF. Driven in large part by Herr's efforts, the churchwide MYF continued to grow and flourish in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The bittersweet end of churchwide MYF: By the summer of 1961, the need for more internal direction led the MYF Cabinet to ask, Where does MYF stop and other youth work start? This question reflected a growing concern within the Mennonite church about the lack of communication between various Mennonite committees, organizations and institutions. In the early 1960s, the Mennonite Church began a process of revision that eventually resulted in a major restructuring of Mennonite organizations in the early 1970s. Concerns within MYF regarding the purposes and direction of the organization grew out of concerns in the broader Mennonite church.

In 1966, MYF delegates voted to suspend the

GEORGE R. STUART
AUDITORIUM

No national organization has taken the place of churchwide MYF.

MC USA Archives-Goshen

MYF Constitution and the annual MYF meetings because of the increasing cost and energy required to coordinate national conventions. One year later, the MYF Cabinet officially dissolved itself, passing many of its responsibilities on to a broader Churchwide Youth Council, which included youth workers from each regional conference of the Mennonite Church.

Understanding the end of churchwide MYF: The churchwide MYF was dissolved in the late 1960s for various reasons. First, the political and social climate of the 1960s brought a new emphasis on connecting Mennonite youth with the broader society and world, not just local congregations. This emphasis on service and social involvement led to critiques of MYF as an insular organization that withdrew youth from social engagement.

Second, there was an increasing desire in many denominations to integrate youth into the life of the whole congregation and denomination instead of maintaining a separate youth organization. Some church leaders took this a step further and wanted youth to be active in the official decision-making of the denomination by involving them in General Conference delegate sessions, nominating them for leadership positions and committee roles and even including them as elders in congregations.

Third, there was a growing disconnect between highschool-age and college-age youth that made the format of churchwide MYF difficult to maintain. As more Mennonite young people left for college or voluntary service following high school graduation, the cultural and social divide between high school youth and college-age young adults grew. It became increasingly difficult for young adults (on the MYF Cabinet) to give counsel and provide leadership for high school youth.

Finally, increases in the number of conference youth secretaries and youth ministers decreased the workload and importance of the churchwide MYF. As more conferences created positions for adults working with youth, connecting these youth secretaries with each other became more important than providing new resources and programs for youth. As local conferences began doing more, the churchwide MYF could do less.

Together, these four changes helped bring about the end of churchwide MYF in 1968. In large part, the dismantling of MYF was not due to major flaws of the organization but simply changes that occurred in the Mennonite church and in society over the course of 20 years. While the organization was no longer adequate by 1968, MYF had largely fulfilled its purpose: it had created a sense of unity among Mennonite youth, given them a sense of belonging in a pluralistic society and helped nurture the faith and spiritual development of many Mennonite young people.

While modern-day Mennonite youth conventions continue to provide a similar opportunity for faith formation and social interaction among Mennonite youth, no national organization has taken the place of churchwide MYF. Without the formal structure of churchwide MYF to foster leadership development and faith formation for our youth, the denomination and individual congregations must intentionally provide these opportunities in new and imaginative ways. !Explore (run by Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary) and Ministry Inquiry (a joint program of Mennonite Church USA and various Mennonite colleges and universities) are two examples of attempts to formally invite youth to explore leadership possibilities, but more creativity is needed for individual congregations.

Changing times call for changing structures. Churchwide MYF was a successful model for youth ministry in the mid-20th century; today's church must continue to evaluate its structures and programs to ensure that youth are regularly given meaningful leadership opportunities and nurtured in their faith development.

Jonny Gerig Meyer is a second-year student at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and a member of Benton Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind. He wrote this as a student at Goshen College.

Doing and learning make

A look at the early history of three Mennonite short-term service programs

by Matt Harms

Short-term mission trips were a part of my growing up. When I was young, I lived in southeastern Kentucky, where my parents were program coordinators for Mennonite Central Committee Appalachia. As part of their duties they oversaw the Sharing with Appalachian People program, which provided opportunities for Christian youth groups to experience service and do emergency housing repair for the local community. Later, as a high school youth, I went on several weeklong service trips. After enrolling at Goshen (Ind.) College, I stayed involved in short-term service programs. I spent the summer of 2006 working as a carpenter for the SWAP program in Elkhorn, W.Va., and the following summer I volunteered with Habitat for Humanity in the Dominican Republic, helping host volunteer groups that came from the United States and Canada to do construction work for one or two weeks.

Mennonite leaders started these programs primarily as a means to educate Mennonite youth about service.

These experiences have been instrumental in my faith development and have helped me define what it means to be a Mennonite. In the summer of 2008, when Bob Yoder, our campus pastor, asked me to research an aspect of the history of youth ministry in the Mennonite church, I decided to look at several Mennonite short-term service programs. Eventually I focused on SWAP, Group Venture and Denver Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection (DOOR).

Short-term missions in general have experienced incredible growth since the early 1980s. Participation in short-term missions grew from 25,000 people in 1980 to 1.6 million in 2006. There are many positive reasons for doing these trips. They are great cross-cultural educational experiences. Youth who participate in these programs are more likely to do voluntary service in the future, and youth who continue to do service work more firmly bond to their faith community.

Still, many critics have spoken out against short-term mission programs. Jim Dekker, co-director of the Center for Youth Ministry Studies at North Park Theological Seminary, warns that youth groups can exploit local communities by acting like "tourists in a zoo." Others warn that without proper education beforehand, participants may act in culturally insensitive and harmful ways on service trips. Similarly, the educational benefits these trips provide may be overstated. They're so short that without follow up education they are not likely to create lasting change in participants, and at their worst they can reinforce harmful ethnocentric ideas. Even if they do provide good educational experiences, many suggest that these programs aren't ethical because they are generally geared to provide positive developmental experiences to middle- or upper-class youth without doing empowering service work for needy communities.

Thankfully, SWAP, DOOR and Group Venture avoided doing serious harm to host communities. Hosting communities had agencies in all three programs, and SWAP, DOOR and Group Venture worked alongside local service agencies instead of taking over. At the same time they all had orientation materials that helped groups relate to local individuals in sensitive ways, and while no comprehensive surveys have been conducted, interviews and archival records suggest that youth participants left such programs with fewer stereotypical ideas about poverty and a desire to serve for a longer period of time in the future.

Yet critics are right to complain that programs like SWAP, DOOR and Group Venture are geared to provide positive experiences for middle-class youth and not to do ideal service work. Mennonite leaders started these programs primarily as a means to educate Mennonite youth about service. A survey of Mennonite youth at the 1983 Bethlehem Youth Convention revealed that only 10 percent of the youth there planned on participating in Mennonite voluntary service programs, while only 7 percent wanted to become missionaries, teachers or pastors in the Mennonite church. At the same time, non-Mennonite short-term programs grew in the 1980s and threatened a distinctly Mennonite understanding of mission. Responding to these pressures Mennonite service agencies created SWAP, DOOR and Group Venture in 1985 and 1986 to provide hands-on service experiences to educate youth about service. In other

good short-term service

words, physical service work was a means to educate youth, not a primary goal.

That's not to say the work youth did in these trips was irrelevant. Without being willing to humbly offer their gifts in service, participants would have exploited local communities. Moreover, participants did useful work. In fact, host communities in Appalachia desperately needed the emergency housing-repair services that SWAP participants provided.

Still, because youth were unskilled and came for only a week at a time, they rarely did ideal service work. These programs were clearly important educational tools, encouraging youth to mobilize their time and resources to serve selflessly and lift up those on the margins of society, but we must remember that these programs were valuable primarily as educational tools, not as models for service.

This means that we need to be careful about how we participate in these programs. For starters, we shouldn't emphasize doing at the expense of learning. This starts with adult leaders. Ironically, throughout my research I found that when problems occurred, they generally came from youth leaders who had rigid ideas about what service was and were intent on carrying it out. Leaders and youth need to participate humbly, serving as they are asked and being prepared to learn in the process.

Furthermore, if we as participants focus so much on doing that we forget about learning, we promote an unhealthy service model. While working in soup kitchens or food pantries and painting buildings is important work that needs to get done, bringing in youth from outside the community is hardly an empowering way to address these issues. Ideally, we should help local communities address those problems on their own. In the end, if participants think service means traveling out of state one week during the summer to help out a stranger, then these programs have failed. Church communities need to help youth continue to build on the lessons they have begun to learn through short-term service experiences by challenging youth to serve on a long-term basis in their local communities.

Leaders and youth need to participate humbly, serving as they are asked and being prepared to learn in the process.

Finally, we must be careful that short-term service programs do not detract from empowering service work. It's relatively easy to justify the amount of money that SWAP, DOOR and Group Venture participants spent because program and travel costs were low, but it's much harder to justify spending thousands of dollars on an international week- or two-week service trip. That money could hire many local workers who could work much more efficiently than youth volunteers. Educating Mennonite youth about service is a valuable endeavor, but we must avoid investing so much money in these programs that we take resources away from more effective forms of service.

Ultimately, these short-term programs are not going to go away, despite their critics. In an ideal world we would all commit to a lifestyle of service without ever needing short-term, hands-on experiences to help us live that way. But for many of us, it's a week-long summer mission trip that starts us down that path. And short-term service programs can be a valuable part of Mennonite Church USA's youth ministry, as long as we understand they are primarily valuable for their ability to encourage youth to use their time, resources and skills in more ideal forms of service in the future.

Matt Harms works with Mennonite Central Committee in Bosnia-Herzegovina and is a member of Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church. He wrote this as a student at Goshen (Ind.) College.

Youth ministry should be missional

3 aspects of a missional youth ministry

by Sallie Reed

Which is a picture of a "missional" youth ministry: Skating youth workers who read from the Bible while tackling ramps and 360s? A coffeehouse that through music and art seeks to show God's desire for relationship to teenagers who would never step foot in a church? A group of teenagers and adults who meet in a Sunday school room amid folding chairs, Bibles and brownies?

We need to invite youth to see the God moments in their lives and accept the call of Jesus to know him more intimately.

Trick question. The answer is all the above. All these ministries seek to meet youth where they are—geographically, emotionally and spiritually. They honor God, build God's kingdom and invite youth into a closer relationship with God.

Whether youth have been raised in a Christian home or do not even know who Jesus is, there will come a point where ownership of faith needs to take place. This is why ministry to teens has a natural missional tendency.

I find three components in a missional youth ministry: (1) creating an environment where teens can be themselves, (2) adults willing to be authentic and open in modeling their own faith journeys and (3) leaders willing to invite youth to be a part of the family of Christ by showing the work of God today.

Youth ministries should be a safe and welcoming space. Not safe in the sense of no adventure, no excitement, no radical living for Christ, but safe in the way teens feel encouraged to be themselves, be real, struggle with doubts and ask questions.

Teenage years are filled with anxiety, fun, excitement and questions. Questions range from Who am I? and, How does God fit into my life? to, Should I date, and if so, whom should I date? If youth can't turn to the people of God to authentically grow and struggle in their faith, where can they go?

I remember speaking to a youth leader as a young teen. I was not sure if I was ready to make a continuing commitment to Christ. I had some doubts; I had questions. The one thing I remember in our conversation was my youth leader's encouragement in pointing out that doubts aren't necessarily harmful. It's what we do with doubts that make them harmful. If we allow God to work through our doubts and work through our anxiety, we actually wind up in a closer relationship with God and a greater realization of God in our lives. This conversation helped open me to seeking God in a way I had not before.

A missional youth ministry also requires adult leaders willing to be authentic and vulnerable. When teens come to us with questions, we should not give them easy answers, especially in situations when there are no easy answers. We need to be willing to struggle alongside them and show that we, too, don't know all the answers and that that's OK.

God has given each of us our own faith journey. What a gift to share with youth, as we share where we were and where God has led us! We are still in process, and God is still at work in our lives; youth need to know this.

The third aspect of being missional is not to leave kids hanging where they are, in despair and doubt. We recognize we don't have all the answers, but we know Someone who does. We need to invite youth to see the God moments in their lives and accept the call of Jesus to know him more intimately.

Being an intentionally missional youth ministry allows opportunities to witness growth in the lives of youth and in our own lives. When we meet teens where they are, it's exciting to have the privilege of walking with them and inviting them to experience a greater love and relationship with their God.

Sallie Reed is associate pastor of children and youth at Bally (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

www.sxc.hu.com

Highway 40, New Mexico

by Jennifer Halteman Schrock

They travel in twos like Mormons.
Silver tankers
Chilled and loaded;
Labeled in big red letters
Like children's toys.

Where do they come from?
I have not seen a cow in weeks;
Only the red desert
and a horizon of dry breasts.

If we have trucks like these
In Goshen, I cannot see them.
Milk seeps into the city;
They could pump it in
Through the sewer for all I know.

But here, where the earth is barren
And the sky a blank page,
Milk travels like the gospel:
A glorious diesel tract.

Jennifer Halteman Schrock attends Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Ind.

Clarity about the Pink Menno Campaign

Luke Yoder attends First Mennonite Church in Denver.

Jim Schrag concluded his formal response to the Pink Menno Campaign with these fitting words: "May God continue to have mercy on us and God's Spirit guide us, inviting us all to extraordinary patience and perseverance with each other in the midst of sincere disagreement and contrasting interpretations of Scripture" (see Readers Say, Aug. 18). As one of the leaders of Pink Menno, I echo these words as we seek to engage one another meaningfully, recognizing that each one of us is working to best live out our calling as members of Christ's body.

As I initially read Schrag's letter in July, when it was distributed to conference ministers to distribute to their congregations (or not), I was taken aback. The perspective outlined was completely antithetical to what many had experienced at Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 in Columbus, Ohio. Schrag and I have since communicated personally about many of the specifics of the letter, but as his letter was printed in a public forum, for which it was not originally intended, it seems appropriate to respond on behalf of Pink Menno in a public forum as well.

We are not talking about a group of people outside the church trying to force the church to change its beliefs.

While there have been responses to Schrag's letter that have been more thorough than I can be here (see www.pinkmenno.org), I'll comment on three of the most problematic components of the letter.

1. All the activities in question at Columbus were lumped under the heading "Pink Mennos" in Mr. Schrag's letter. While it was flattering to be given credit for the variety of events going on in Columbus related to welcome and inclusion, it would not be fair for Pink Menno to take all the credit. In fact, numerous independently formed groups were present, representing a variety of Mennonite stakeholder groups. And all were eager to talk about the same topic: How can Mennonite Church USA effectively live out our vision of God's healing and hope flowing through us to the world when we are not providing healing and hope to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer members of our own church body?

2. Although Schrag's letter calls for "agreeing and disagreeing in love," Pink Menno was never contacted about any of the "problematic occurrences." In an effort to "go directly to those with whom we disagree; avoid behind-the-back criticism," it seems appropriate that Pink Menno had been contacted prior to the distribution of Schrag's letter. Perhaps this would have cleared up the misunderstandings related to the activities of other advocacy groups that were attributed to Pink Menno. This would have also allowed Schrag to take into account the frequent painful encounters experienced by those wearing pink, including numerous instances of extremely hateful and bigoted behavior.

3. The tone and language of the letter appears to characterize Pink Menno as belonging outside the church. In fact, Pink Menno is made up of Sunday school teachers, Bible-school curriculum writers, music leaders, worship planners, pastors, young adults, older adults, youth, members of Executive Leadership, Mennonite college faculty, missionaries and Mennonite Voluntary Service workers. We are not talking about a group of people outside the church trying to come in and force the church to change its beliefs. Rather, Pink Menno consists of committed, faithful Mennonites who see an area of the church in need of attention. Isn't this precisely what we want to see in a healthy church? Passionate, gifted, Spirit-filled prophets who can infuse the church with new life, energy and vitality? Pink Menno is not the "other." Pink Menno is a representation of what a healthy, Spirit-filled church looks like.

Pink Menno and its wide variety of members, cutting across all sections of Mennonite Church USA, continues to have hope. We continue to envision a church where leadership nurtures the energy, passion and commitment to the church of its young adults. We continue to envision a church where we walk hand in hand, celebrating our similarities and creatively exploring those areas in which we differ. We continue to envision a church that considers the possibility that a grass-roots, lay movement like Pink Menno may actually be the Spirit moving among us. TM

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of *The Mennonite*, the board for The Mennonite, Inc., or Mennonite Church USA.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Healing justice**—Ted Grimsrud
- **A crash course in nonviolence**—Becky Oberg

Young pastors address MC USA leaders

Executive Board considers changing to a three-year cycle for adult conventions

Four young pastors aimed to inspire and challenge about 110 denominational leaders during a meeting of seven Mennonite Church USA boards Sept. 24-25. One of those pastors went home with her own confidence in the church renewed.

"When I listen to the struggles of black and Hispanic people, the prejudice and injustice they have endured over the years, I have often questioned, Do I want to be Mennonite?" said Madeline Maldonado, co-pastor of Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvacion (Ark of Salvation Mennonite Church) in Fort Myers, Fla., in her first presentation to the group.

The next day, during a panel discussion, Maldonado said she felt the "wheels are starting to roll" in denominational support for racial-ethnic congregations.

"I'm encouraged to hear and actually see that something is being done about the needs of the ethnic-group churches," Maldonado said. "I can leave here saying the church as a whole is working to help us out."

Learning to work together as a whole was the meeting's goal. Executive Board members said the gathering confirmed that denominational agencies and boards are cooperating more effectively. The Executive Board has been pushing for closer "alignment" of church structures ever since it announced a plan to merge the various boards into one board more than a year and a half ago. It later decided to shelve that idea and to decide in February 2010 whether structural changes are needed.

The Kansas City meeting was the second gathering of all boards in MC USA's seven-year history. The first was in Columbus, Ohio, in June 2008. Participants included the boards of Mennonite Education Agency, Mennonite Health Services Alliance, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Publishing Network, Mennonite Mutual Aid and The Mennonite and the top leadership group, the Executive Board.

"This event accentuated for me the amount of shift that has happened since our meeting in Columbus," said Executive Board member David Sutter of South Bend, Ind. "We are making progress toward seeing ourselves as one church and finding ways to work together to streamline ministries."

The boards conducted their own business in separate sessions. In joint sessions they talked about their hopes and dreams for the denomination. To prompt their thinking, they heard from four young pastors: Maldonado; Sara Dick, associate pastor of Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.; Thomas Dunn, associate pastor of youth and young adults at Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church; and Isaac Villegas, pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship.

Everett Thomas

A panel of young Mennonite pastors at the all-boards meeting (left to right): Madeline Maldonado, Thomas Dunn, Sara Dick, Isaac Villegas

Dick suggested a principle for managing diversity. She said the church should not aim for autonomy at the expense of unity, nor uniformity at the expense of authenticity.

She also critiqued a tendency to focus on action rather than on faith formation—an approach that leads to "doing things we don't understand the reason for."

Dunn said he dreamed that "authentic kingdom living" would become the church's status quo.

"It's not agenda-driven, it's just seeing a need and being Jesus to that," he said.

Villegas told of his congregation's ministry to prisoners and asked, "What if we turned prisons into kingdom outposts?"

He noted that Jesus proclaimed release for the prisoners and that "the best of Mennonite spirituality was born in prison" when the 16th-century Anabaptists were persecuted in Europe.

Executive Board: During its own meetings Sept. 23-25, the Executive Board decided to instruct staff to try to increase congregational participation in MC USA conventions and to make conventions part of the denominational "funding stream."

Currently, staff try to make conventions at least break even. The 2007 San José convention ended with a deficit of about $250,000. The 2009 Columbus convention is expected to have a positive balance of $40,000 to $50,000. About 40 percent of congregations were represented at Columbus. But a much higher percentage of the

Continued on page 21

Two Mennonite associations to merge

Mennonite Medical Association and Mennonite Nurses Association to join.

On Aug. 31, members of Mennonite Medical Association (MMA) and Mennonite Nurses Association (MNA) decided to merge, form a new organization and gain a wider membership. This new organization for health-care professionals is unnamed as of now.

A major reason for the merger is that health-care professionals function more frequently as teams in work environments than they did in the past, says Sam Showalter, executive secretary at MMA. Both MMA and MNA formed in the 1940s.

"Since we work together in real life; we think we should also work together in the life of our organization," says Showalter.

Showalter says he hopes that a new organization could gain a much larger membership base and improve the Web site, publication *Mennonite Health Journal* and annual convention.

The group also hopes to improve communication between itself and health-care workers in congregations.

"We'd like to become better known in the church and help churches improve their congregation health-team planning," Showalter says.

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

At a national church level, the organization plans to be involved more intimately in health-care discussions and policy making, whereas in the past the denomination focused more on institutions and payers over providers, he says.

In June 2007, MMA looked at ways to broaden its membership criteria, and the MNA board brainstormed about how to grow.

These hopes came together at a joint MMA-MNA board conference call in December 2007 and meeting in March 2008.

Then at the annual joint convention of MMA and MNA, held at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa., in late June, members of the study team presented their findings and recommendations from a year of work. The Study Team was made up of members of both MMA and MNA.

More than 95 percent of members present approved a proposal to create "a new organization of Anabaptist health-care providers, including both physicians and nurses but also a wide variety of additional caregivers."

Organizational bylaws required the proposal to be mailed to all members of both organizations. Allowance for a 30-day response period set a deadline of Aug. 31.

With a goal of concluding the transition by Dec. 31, 2010, an implementation team will cover three areas: the legal/financial work of the transition; membership and personnel issues; and program that includes convention, periodicals and publicity, according to Showalter.

The team will also find a director or staff of the organization and "further clarify the goals and objectives," he says.

The new group's membership will aim at "individual providers who are part of a clearly defined health-care discipline with professional standards and licensure requirements" (e.g., pharmacists, physician assistants, physical therapists and possibly others) who are also part of the Anabaptist community or supportive of its values, including students and those retired from health-care professions.

The mission statement describes the new organization as "an interdisciplinary community of Anabaptist health-care providers that promotes justice in health care through education, advocacy and service at home and abroad.

The organization provides opportunities for dialogue on biomedical issues, based on shared faith values, and seeks to nurture the integration of faith and practice."—*Anna Groff*

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ITALY, AUSTRIA and GERMANY (July 7-17)
ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (July 23 - August 4)
SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29 - August 11)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE III with PAUL ZEHR (September 5-18)
THE ROAD to JERUSALEM (September 11-22)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE IV (September 16-29)

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Board approves *The Mennonite* redesign

Beginning January 2010, the magazine will be a 64-pager published monthly.

Beginning in 2010, *The Mennonite* will be a 64-page monthly magazine instead of a 32-pager published twice each month. With a new design approved by the The Mennonite, Inc., board in Kansas City, Mo., on Sept. 27, the larger format will have a fresh look and opportunities for additional coverage.

"The new design aligns us with Mennonite Church USA graphic standards without abandoning the magazine's distinctive identity," says board chair Susan Sommer. "I'm looking forward to more news analysis and in-depth feature stories, two things our limited space does not currently allow; and I'm delighted we've made room for the popular *OurFaith Digest* cross-word puzzle."

The redesign was in response to several requests. In its September 2008 review of *The Mennonite*, the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board asked for the magazine to more closely align with the denomination's graphic standards and color palette. Several of the magazine's staff members have also been calling for an update of the current 2002 design. The larger format will allow for:

- a new column about and by young adults, called "New Voices,"
- a new section of short, pithy quotes, factoids, proverbs and statistics from the broader Christian world, called "Miscellany,"
- one longer article of 3,000 words when a subject warrants such length,
- a "News Analysis" section with original reporting on trends relevant to Mennonite Church USA,
- opportunity for family members to include a photo and additional information about loved ones in the obituaries,
- a Bible crossword puzzle and names of puzzlers who completed the previous month's puzzle.

Most current elements in the magazine will continue. Some, however, will be renamed. The Readers Say section will be called "Letters." Speaking Out will be renamed "Opinion." Birth and marriage announcements will no longer be included in the For The Record section. Those will be published on the magazine's Web site.

Some current columns will remain in similar locations, but others will move. Page 2 will be available, at a premium, to advertisers. The Grace and Truth column will move to page 6. The column by Mennonite Church USA's executive director will move to the inside back cover (page 63). The Letters section will remain near the front as will News Digest.

A monthly frequency will also relieve budgetary pressures caused by decreased advertising revenue. IPC Print Services, which prints *The Mennonite*, calculates that a 64-page monthly will annually save $64,000 when compared to the current cost of printing and mailing two, 32-page issues each month.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Young pastors (continued from page 19)

total membership was represented because most larger congregations sent delegates.

Conventions: Executive Board members discussed whether the denomination should continue to have conventions every two years or shift to a three-year cycle. Conventions are scheduled for Pittsburgh in 2011 and Phoenix in 2013. One idea is for youth to continue to meet every two years and adults every three, which would bring youth and adults together on a six-year cycle.

"I can't imagine an adult convention without youth," said Merrill Moyer, board member from Souderton, Pa. "They provide the energy and excitement that make it interesting to me."

The Corinthian Plan: With just days remaining before the Oct. 1 enrollment deadline for The Corinthian Plan, Harder was hopeful enough congregations would join to enable the plan to be implemented. The plan includes a mutual aid component to insure those with pre-existing conditions and those whose congregations cannot afford insurance.—*Paul Schrag*

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Kanagy studies churches in Global South

Grant from Eastern Mennonite Missions launches international study.

Thanks to a grant from Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), Conrad L. Kanagy, associate professor of sociology at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College has launched an international study of Mennonite churches in nine countries. This Multi-Nation Anabaptist Profile I, follows Kanagy's 2006 study, which he published in the book *Road Signs for the Journey: A Profile of Mennonite Church USA*.

Kanagy's vision for the current international project came in 2003, when he visited the Meserete Kristos (Mennonite) Church in Ethiopia. At a meeting of the International Missions Association, hosted by the MKC missions department, Kanagy experienced a vibrant and growing church that now numbers 139,000—more than all North American Mennonites combined.

Kanagy shared his growing sense that the story of the Mennonite church in the southern hemisphere needs to be told with Richard Showalter, president of Eastern Mennonite Missions. As a sociologist, Kanagy was particularly interested in documenting through survey research the attitudes, beliefs and values of Anabaptist Mennonites in the Global South.

Interested in tracing the development of these churches since their origins, EMM agreed to fund a two-year study of 11 Anabaptist-related church bodies in nine countries: Honduras, Guatemala, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, India, Vietnam, Indonesia and the United States.

Now one year into the project, Kanagy reports that the survey has been or is currently being conducted in seven of the nine countries. The remaining countries will receive their questionnaires for distribution this fall. The survey has been translated into 11 languages. Because so few scholars conduct social science surveys in the Global South, Kanagy is utilizing unique and creative methods for gathering data.

For example, Galen Groff, an EMM worker among the rural K'ekchi in Guatemala, is gathering data with people half of whom are illiterate.

Jumanne Migiri, representing 60,000 Mennonites in Tanzania scattered over a large area, reports that the process in his country is complicated by the many different dialects of Swahili. But he is pressing on, believing that the data will give them a better understanding of themselves as a church.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the complicated project, Kanagy says, is the relationships he's been able to develop with people like Migiri. He asked each participating church body to select an 'anchor' for the project. Last October he met with the country anchors in Delhi, India, to kick off the project.

"This project is a huge challenge," Kanagy says. "But it's moving ahead on schedule. Frankly, I thought I would be pushing my anchors. Instead, it's the other way around. I am having trouble keeping up with their work." This fall, Kanagy will begin to analyze data from the project and co-author reports with each anchor as they reflect on the meaning of the data within their contexts.

—Jewel Showalter of Eastern Mennonite Missions

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Sister Helen Prejean speaks at Bethel

Author of 'Dead Man Walking' tells students they can make a difference.

Sister Helen Prejean got a rare standing ovation from the convocation audience at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., Sept. 21.

The longtime anti-death penalty advocate perhaps best known for her book *Dead Man Walking* said to her listeners, mostly students, packed into Krehbiel Auditorium, "Young people, do you know how strong your voice is?"

"I've met a lot of politicians over the years," she went on, "and almost all of them want young people to like them. If you think a small group of college students can't make a difference, you don't understand Jesus' [parable] about the leaven [in Matthew 13]."

She offered a concrete illustration of the difference students can make—organizations such as the Innocence Project, through which student researchers have discovered evidence that has exonerated people wrongly convicted of crimes, including a number on death row.

The Peace Committee at Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kan., brought Prejean to south central Kansas as the special speaker for the church's Sept. 20 service. She encouraged the Bethel community to become involved in the Kansas Coalition against the Death Penalty.

Before she gave her convocation presentation, Prejean sat down with assistant professor of Bible and religion Brett Dewey's Nonviolence Theory and Practice class. Another visitor to the class, one Prejean was eager to meet, was Kansas state representative Carolyn McGinn, whose district includes Harvey County.

The death penalty has become a live issue again in Kansas thanks to McGinn, who introduced a bill in the last legislative session to outlaw the state's death penalty on account of its steep cost in a time of deep budget cuts and deficits. Kansas was one of the last states to reinstate the death penalty, in 1994. There are 11 people currently on Kansas' death row. No one has been executed in Kansas since 1965. According to McGinn's data, the estimated median cost of a death penalty case is about 70 percent higher than a non-death penalty case.

"People say, 'This is a moral issue—it shouldn't be about money,'" Prejean told the class. "But money is a moral issue. What kind of difference would [the money spent on one death penalty case] make with at-risk kids and drug addicts, with improving education?"—things that could help prevent violent crimes from happening in the first place—she asked.

She cited two other main reasons for her opposition to the death penalty—lack of trust in the federal government to be able to decide "who lives and who dies," and the selectivity of the death penalty system. The people currently on death row are, by a wide margin, disproportionately poor, powerless and nonwhite, she said.

Dead Man Walking (1983) describes her experience walking with two Louisiana men through their executions (she has since accompanied four more). In 1995, *Dead Man Walking* became a major motion picture, which spawned the Dead Man Walking School Theatre Project, through which Bethel College was able to perform the play in 2006.—*Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*

Sister Helen Prejean

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CALENDAR

Illinois Mennonite Heritage Center Fall Program to feature Peggy Reiff Miller presenting "A Tribute to the Seagoing Cowboys;" Oct. 17; 10 a.m. IMHC, 675 State Route 116, Metamora, IL 61548; Phone: 309-367-2551; Email: imhc@m-tco.com; Web site: www.imhgs.org

Annual Mennonite Disaster Service All Unit Gathering: Feb. 12-13, 2010, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. We invite everyone out to join us in celebrating the work of MDS—worship, reporting, storytelling, music and food. This year's workshops will focus on MDS' 60th Anniversary through stories and media. See www.mds.mennonite.net to register after Nov. 15 or call 1-866-261-1274.

WORKERS

Bartow, David, ended a term as intentional interim pastor at North Baltimore Mennonite Church, Baltimore, Md., on June 7.

Crane, Stephen, was licensed toward ordination as pastor at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen, Pa., on March 12.

Dik, Oleg, was licensed as church planter at West End Fellowship, Lancaster, Pa., on Aug. 9.

Dintaman, Pamela, ended pastorate at Community Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Aug. 2.

Dula, Michelle, licensed toward ordination as associate pastor at Blossom Hill Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on May 17.

Eberly, Matthew, was ordained as deacon at Shiloh Mennonite Church, Reading, Pa., on June 6.

Friesen, Douglas, was licensed toward ordination as associate pastor at Blossom Hill Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on April 21. Doug was previously licensed for specific ministry by Lancaster Conference for his associate pastor role at Blossom Hill MC.

Godshall, Susan, was ordained as chaplain at Philhaven Hospital, Mt. Gretna, Pa., on June 14.

Goertz, Charles, was installed as pastor at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa., on May 3.

Graber, Daniel, ended intentional interim pastorates at Whitehall Mennonite Church, Whitehall, Pa., and West Swamp Mennonite Church, Quakertown, Pa., on April 30.

Graber, Rose Waltner, ended a pastorate at Upper Milford Mennonite Church, Zionsville, Pa., on April 19.

Hedrick, Michael, was licensed for specific ministry for chaplaincy with Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pa., on July 12.

Heindel, James, began a term as lead pastor at Stony Brook Mennonite Church, York, Pa., on Aug. 2.

Hollinger, Cheryl Sell, was licensed as education director at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa., on May 3.

Horst, Barbara Unruh, ordained as pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Reinholds, Pa., on May 3.

Lapp, John H., began interim pastorate at Birch Grove Mennonite Church, Port Allegany, Pa., on March 1.

Leaman, Dale L., was licensed as deacon at Weaverland Mennonite Church, East Earl, Pa., on Aug. 23.

Leaman, Jeremy, was licensed as lead pastor at Palo Alto Mennonite Church, Pine Grove, Pa., on July 1.

Martin, James L., was licensed as pastor of worship at Weaverland Mennonite Church, East Earl, Pa., on Aug. 23.

Metzler, J. Michael, was licensed as youth pastor at Mountville Mennonite Church, Mountville, Pa., on Sept. 1.

Miller, Sharon Wyse, ended a term as pastor at Ambler Mennonite Church, Ambler, Pa., on Sept. 30.

Petersheim, Robert, was installed as pastor at Conestoga Mennonite Church, Morgantown, Pa., on May 31.

Redclay, Jed, was licensed at Mountville Mennonite Church, Mountville, Pa., as a mission worker to Central America on Aug. 9

Riddle, Chris, was ordained at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., for overseas ministry in Bari, Italy, on Aug. 30.

Sherer, Joseph, began a term as intentional interim lead pastor at Elizabethtown Mennonite Church, Elizabethtown, Pa.

Wenger, James, ended intentional interim pastorate at Conestoga Mennonite Church, Morgantown, Pa., on May 10.

Yoder, Ray, began intentional interim pastorate at Ridgeview Mennonite Church, Gordonville, Pa., on March 8.

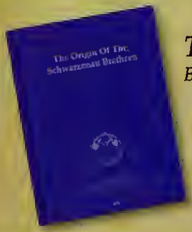
BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Bautista, Jude, July 12, to Joe and Glory Bautista, Pasadena, Calif.

Camilleri, Jonas Quinn, Aug. 19, to Brent and Melissa Rice Camilleri, Perkasie, Pa.

Childs, Casey Efren, Aug. 30, to Daniel and Michele Tosh Childs, Quakertown, Pa.

Davies, Ellis James, Sept. 14, to Benjamin and Karah Doherty Davies, Denver.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Dutkiewicz, Milo Benjamin, Aug. 24, to Rob and Kate Willems Dutkiewicz, South Bend, Ind.

Erickson, Eislen Lily, July 29, to Steven and Nicole Nafziger Erickson, Lancaster, Pa.

Farr, Daxton Leroy, Sept. 10, to Frederick and Shelli Hummel Farr, Millersburg, Ohio.

Gingerich, Josiah Douglas, Aug. 9, to David and Ericka Histand Gingerich, Canby, Ore.

Hangey, Brentley Robert, Aug. 28, to Brent and Jillianne Helverson Hangey, Quakertown, Pa.

Holste, Cody John, July 14, to Jeff and Nancy Sebes Holste, Colorado Springs, Colo.

King, Braylin Alivia, Aug. 28, to Scott and Kelsie King, Wauseon. Ohio.

Landis, Owen Wesley, Sept. 8, to Isaac and Melissa Hochstetler Landis, Souderton, Pa.

Martin, Nathan Edwin, Sept. 13, to Dustin and Sara Burch Martin, El Dorado, Kan.

McNeal, Makenna Grace, Aug. 16, to Jeffrey and Elizabeth Smith McNeal, Dayton, Va.

Miller, Cadence Gwen, July 30, to Roderick and Melanie Friesen Miller, Plain City, Ohio.

Moyer, Gabriella Rose, Sept. 1, to Jonathan and Ann Ruppert Moyer, Alburtis, Pa.

Newcomer Miller, Joah Marcos, Aug. 31, to Jeff and Monica Newcomer Miller, Goshen, Ind.

Risser, Olivia Belle, July 20, to Jay and Stephenie Risser, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Schloneger, Eli Randall, Aug. 20, to Mark and Sarah Hubbard Schloneger, Waynesboro, Va.

Steiner, Cole Isaiah, Aug. 19, to Ryan and Hannah Rohrer Steiner, Orrville, Ohio.

Thomas, Jayden Taylor, Aug. 15, to Richard and Stacey Millar Thomas, Quakertown, Pa.

Trissel, Owen Mason, Aug. 31, to Cory and Charity Stoddard Trissel, Harrisonburg, Va.

Waltner, Oliver Dell, July 14, to Jeremy and Stacey Kramer Waltner, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Wheeler, Sonya Janae, Sept. 1, to Dave and Jana Goering Wheeler, Hudson, Mich.

Wiebe, Zoe Katherine, Sept. 3, to Colin and Jennie Krueger Wiebe, Waterloo, Ontario.

Wolff, Laney Rose, Sept. 4, to Gary and Nancy Noftsier Wolff, Lowville, N.Y.

Zook Koch, Willem Cory, Sept. 4, to Mark Koch and Jane Zook, Newton, Kan.

MARRIAGES

Bahnck/Bishop: Brian Bahnck, Ottsville, Pa., and Nicole Bishop, Doylestown, Pa., Aug. 1, at Deep Run Mennonite Church East, Perkasie, Pa.

Bauerle/Brewer: Bonnie Bauerle, Sabetha, Kan., and Wesley Brewer, Peabody, Kan., July 11, at The United Methodist Church, Bern, Kan.

Christy/Heinlein: Rachel Christy, Oxford, Iowa, and Reece Heinlein, Upland, Ind., Aug. 8, at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City, Iowa.

Detweiler/Stoltzfus: Nathan Detweiler, Iowa City, Iowa, and Karla Stoltzfus, Iowa City, Aug. 15, at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City.

Flasher/Kolb: Jenny Flasher, Spring City, Pa., and Ryan Kolb, Spring City, May 30, at Boyertown Mennonite Church, Boyertown, Pa.

Funk/Platz: Jessica Funk, Hillsboro, Kan., and Brady Platz, Herington, Kan., June 20, at Trinity Mennonite Church, Hillsboro.

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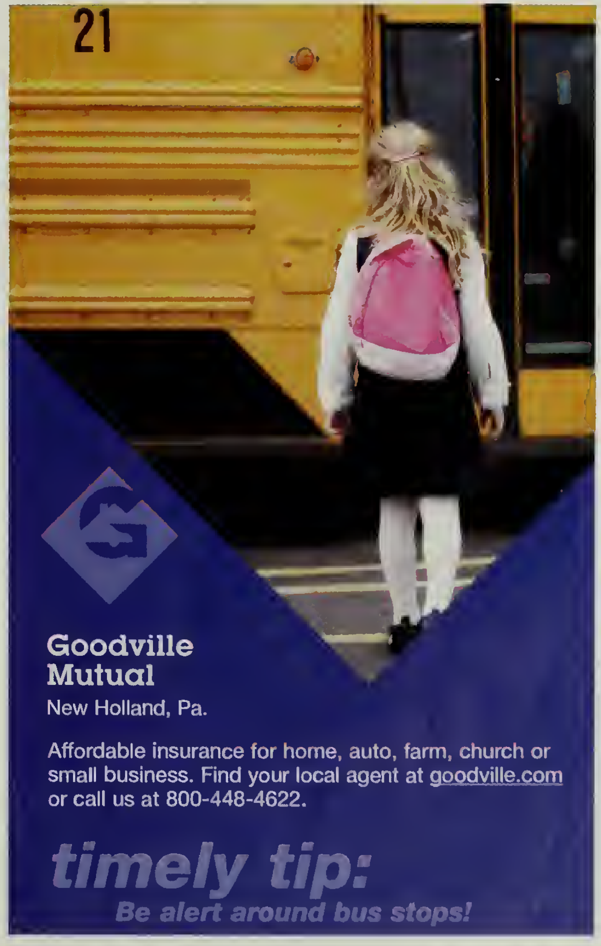

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"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

Gehman/Hershberger: Danielle Gehman, Bechtelsville, Pa., and Benjamin Hershberger, Boyertown, Pa., Aug. 1, at Boyertown Mennonite Church.

Hesed/Ramey: Kezia Hesed, Pawnee Rock, Kan., and Jason Ramey, Newton, Kan., June 6, at Bergthal Mennonite Church, Pawnee Rock.

Hooley/Yoder: Anita Hooley, Canton, Ohio, and Ben Yoder, Lancaster, Pa., Aug. 15, at Pleasant View Mennonite Church, North Lawrence, Ohio.

Howard/Martin: Kendra Howard, Elora, Ontario, and Jared Martin, Wallenstein, Ontario, June 20, at Floradale Mennonite Church, Floradale, Ontario.

Howard-Willms/McNamee: Rachel Howard-Willms, St. Louis, Mo., and Michael McNamee, St. Louis, July 24, in Dublin, Ireland.

Jackson/Yoder: Stephanie Jackson, Thomas, Okla., and Justin Yoder, Hesston, Kan., Sep. 5, at Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Hydro, Okla.

Kimble/Schrader: Rhonda Kimble, North Canton, Ohio, and Adam Schrader, Canton, Ohio, July 25, at First Mennonite at Beech Mennonite, Louisville, Ohio.

McClelland/Moyer: Scott McClelland, Philadelphia, Pa., and Brittany Moyer, Philadelphia, Aug. 23, at Zion Mennonite Church, Souderton, Pa.

Mounday/Thompson: Charles Mounday, El Monte, Calif., and Jennifer Thompson, Bakersfield, Calif., April 10, at LA Arboretum, Arcadia, Calif.

Rufenacht/Stuckey: Jenna Rufenacht, Archbold, Ohio, and Aaron Stuckey, Archbold, Aug. 22, at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Schmeichel/VerDouw: Paula Schmeichel, Hurley, S.D., and Thomas VerDouw, Bismarck, N.D., July 11, at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Swanson Wedel/Williams: Mae Swanson Wedel, Mounridge, Kan., and Ed Williams, Kalona, Iowa, July 18, at West Zion Mennonite Church, Moundridge.

Yoder/Yoder: Katie Yoder, Denver, Colo., and Luke Yoder, Denver, Sept. 6, at Camp Friedenswald, Cassopolis, Mich.

DEATHS

Amstutz, Frederick D., 80, Bluffton, Ohio, died Sept. 1. Spouse: Mary Schmidt Amstutz. Parents: Ezra and Etta Davidson Amstutz. Children: Daniel, James, Steven, Peter; 13 grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 4 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Barnes, Andrew Clark, Paradise, Pa., was born and died June 3. Parents: Thadeus and Charlotte Beiler Barnes. Funeral: June 6 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen, Pa.

Baugher, Mary Elizabeth, 80, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 29. Parents: Grover C. and Tessie McDorman Baugher. Funeral: June 1 at Mount Clinton Mennonite Church, Mount Clinton, Va.

Beck, Frieda L. Short, 94, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 14. Spouse: Herman Beck (deceased). Parents: Henry R. and Eliza Eicher Short. Children: Merle, Carolyn King; seven grandchildren; 21 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 19 at Fairlawn Haven Chapel, Archbold, Ohio.

Beck, Marlene Fay Wyse, 71, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 15. Spouse: Lowell Beck. Parents: Daniel "Digger" and Marjory Werder Wyse. Children: Judi Gongwer, Jan Sears; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 21 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Becker, Edwin, 98, Goessel, Kan., died Aug. 25. Spouse: Elma Wenger Becker (deceased). Spouse: Arletta Selzer Becker (deceased). Spouse: Norma Goering Becker (deceased). Parents: David and Elizabeth Schultz Becker. Children: Elizabeth Hershberger, Martha Yoder, Daniel; nine grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 29 at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan.

Cook, Lester Marcus, 94, Denver, Colo., died June 21. Spouse: Irene Elizabeth Shank Cook (deceased). Parents: Harry and Ida Cook. Children: Donnis Pallaoro, Dale, Daryl, Duane; one grandson. Memorial service: July 12 at Glennon Heights Mennonite Church, Lakewood, Colo.

Culp, Elwood, 86, Goshen, Ind., died July 25. Spouse: Melba Bechtel Culp. Spouse: Martha Card Culp (deceased). Parents: Noble and Minnie Sheets Kauffman. Children: Jan L. Durand, Jerry E. Culp, Nancy Miller, Cindy Burge, Jack Bechtel; 12 grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 28 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Freed, Ida Mae Delp, 95, Souderton, Pa., died Aug. 16. Spouse: Henry K. Freed (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Anna Mininger Delp. Children: Henry, Russell, Ralph, Ronald; 12 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 18 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Frey, John David, 48, Vancouver, British Columbia, died Aug. 6. Parents: Amsey and Ina Bauman Frey. Children: Aila Frey. Funeral: Aug. 24 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, Ontario.

Friesen, Mamie Mae Pankratz, 86, Henderson, Neb., died Aug. 19. Spouse: Paul L. Friesen (deceased). Parents: Henry and Tena Janzen Pankratz. Children: Tim, Sherryl Friesen, Carol Kroeker, Cindy Huebert; 11 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Aug. 22 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Funk, Nelson P., 75, Hillsboro, Kan., died Aug. 25 of Alzheimer's disease. Spouse: Mary Jane Unruh Funk. Parents: Arthur and Katherine Pankratz Funk. Children: Denise, Steve; two grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 29 at Trinity Mennonite Church, Hillsboro.

Grove, Eunice Goldie, 81, Lyndhurst, Va., died Aug. 31. Parents: Isaac E. and Emma Wenger Grove. Funeral: Sept. 6 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.

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Hamsher, Reuben A., 86, Sugarcreek, Ohio, died Sept. 4. Spouse: Mabel Miller Hamsher. Parents: Milo and Ollie Miller Hamsher. Children: Art, Don, Gayle Lehti; eight grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 6 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church, Walnut Creek, Ohio.

Hiebert, Annie D. Dick, 102, Moundridge, Kan., died Sept. 2. Spouse: Albert Hiebert (deceased). Parents: Klaas and Anna Wiens Dick. Funeral: Sept. 4 at Memorial Home, Moundridge.

Kanagy, Bertha M. Kauffman, 83, Belleville, Pa., died Aug. 8. Spouse: Chester J. Kanagy (deceased). Parents: Joseph J. and Fannie Swarey Kauffman. Children: Sharon Green, Carolyn French, James D.; two grandsons, four step-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 13 at Beth-El Mennonite Church, Belleville, Pa.

Kauffman, Roy I., 98, Princeton, Ill., died Sept. 12. Spouse: Helen Nafziger Kauffman. Spouse: Eunice Albrecht Kauffman (deceased). Parents: Noah Daniel and Katherine Egli Kauffman. Children: Susan Kauffman Cater, George, 12 step-children; eight grandchildren; 26 step-grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; 11 step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 16 at Willow Springs Mennonite Church, Tiskilwa, Ill.

Kaufman, Geneva Stucky Wedel, 88, McPherson, Kan., died Aug. 2. Spouse: Marlin Wedel (deceased). Spouse: A.K. Kaufman (deceased). Parents: Chris L. and Martha Graber Stucky. Children: Allen Wedel, Joleen Pauls, Randall, Mary Ellwood; seven grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 6 at First Mennonite Church, McPherson.

Kneller, Anna Fels, 80, Quakertown, Pa., died June 25 of Alzheimer's disease. Spouse: Ralph T. Kneller (deceased). Parents: Ernest and Rose Wolf Fels. Children: Willard; two grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 30 at Funk Funeral Home, Quakertown.

Krehbiel, Ben, 88, Moundridge, Kan., died Aug. 17 of organ failure. Spouse: Jeanne K. Vogt Krehbiel. Children: Richard J., Nancy J. Krehbiel Pierson; two grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 20 at West Zion Church, Moundridge.

Leasa, Kenneth Varden, 60, Downingtown, Pa., died Aug. 4 of brain cancer. Spouse: Marie Marguerite Moy Leasa. Parents: William Kenneth and Betty Brackbill Leasa. Children: Adrienne Leasa, Jennifer Leasa. Funeral: Aug. 8 at Frazer Mennonite Church, Frazer, Pa.

Lukeman, D. Ellen Keim, 75, Goshen, Ind., died Sept. 1. Spouse: Donald L. Lukeman. Parents: Abe and Susan Troyer Keim. Child: Stephanie Priem; two grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 5 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Mast, Miriam Stoltzfus, 94, Ephrata, Pa., died June 9. Spouse: Levi W. Mast (deceased). Parents: Mast and Mary Beiler Stoltzfus. Children: Nelda Grader, Job, Joanna Beidler, Mary Guntz, Martha Snavely, Philip, Nathaniel, Timothy, Vincent, Ada Kauffman, Nevin, Naomi Moyer, Clifford; 36 grandchildren; 46 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 11 at Conestoga Mennonite Church, Morgantown, Pa.

Milan, Lowell Miller, 74, Millersburg, Ohio, died Aug. 24 following heart surgery. Parents: Chauncey Charles and Avora Weaver Miller. Funeral: Aug. 27 at Martins Creek Mennonite Church, Millersburg.

Nafziger, Eugene E., 82, Delavan, Ill., died Aug. 29. Spouse: Emily Stanwood Nafziger. Parents: Aaron and Ella Bachman Nafziger. Children: Debra Becker, Sue Dolan, Kathy Browning, Steve Nafziger; 11 grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 4 at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Nafziger, Maurice "Mose" D., 80, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 13. Spouse: Donna Schmucker Nafziger. Parents: Raymond and Dora Short Nafziger. Children: Rodney, Victoria Zimmer, Dawn Huebner, Dwight; nine grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 17 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Nauman, Kenneth E., 72, Arcadia, Fla., died Sept. 15 of cancer. Spouse: Miriam Weaver Nauman. Parents: Jacob and Florence Shearer Nauman. Children: Dale, Donna Weaver, Bonnie Ropp; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 18 at Bahia Vista Mennonite Church, Sarasota, Fla., and Sept. 20 at Hernley's Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa.

Rice, Miranda Lyn Irene, Pettisville, Ohio, was born and died on Sept. 7. Parents: Nick and Valerie Rupp Rice. Sibling: Ashalyn Rice. Funeral: Sept. 16 at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Schertz, Helen E. Armstrong, 84, Metamora, Ill., died Sept. 5. Spouse: Chester "Chet" H. Schertz (deceased). Parents: Phillip D. and Blanche Mae Kenyon Armstrong. Children: Leslie D., Check H., Douglas L., Sally J. Ringenberg; 12 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 9 at Metamora Mennonite Church.

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Schrock, Simon, 82, Arthur, Ill., died July 29. Spouse: Marie Yutzy Schrock. Parents: Yost and Tillie Schrock. Children: Michael, Sandra Stevens; seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 2 at Arthur Mennonite Church.

Short, Marie Short, 94, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 31. Spouse: Willard L. Short. Parents: Aaron and Sarah Rupp Short. Child: Aden J.; four grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 3 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Slaubaugh, Marvin Dale, 74, Wellman, Iowa, died Sept. 4. Spouse: Alma Grace Miller Slaubaugh. Parents: Jacob Arthur and Mary Anna Yoder Slaubaugh. Children: Kenton J., Cathy Murray, James Dewy Nelson; two grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 9 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa.

Smucker, P. Mark, 62, Indianapolis, Ind., died Sept. 16, of leukemia. Spouse: Jeanne Marie Rhoades Smucker. Parents: Paul and Ella Pearl Smucker. Children: Bethany Martin, Jose Miguel, Rachel Argabrite, Jabar; three grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 19 at Shalom Mennonite Church, Indianapolis.

Snider, Wilson Solomon, 88, Alanson, Mich., died Aug. 24, of kidney failure. Spouse: Barbara Susan Gregory Snider. Parents: David and Lizzie Brubacher Snider. Children: Wesley, Jacob, Audrey Yell, Sara; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; five great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 27 at Maple River Mennonite Church, Brutus, Mich.

Springer, Doris Jean Nafziger, 84, Delevan, Ill., died Aug. 23. Spouse: Mahlon A. Springer. Parents: C. Ralph and Katherine Eichelberger Nafziger. Children: Jane Litwiller, Jill Diekhoff, Alane Mefford, Debbie Baker, Dan; six grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 27 at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Stoltzfus, Marlin R., 64, Christiana, Pa., died Aug. 18 of cardiopulmonary arrest. Parents: Henry S. and Edna M. Umble Stoltzfus. Children: Arlin, Michele Barr; five grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 22 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen, Pa.

Stonesifer, Lydia A. Sharp, 71, Mount Joy, Pa., died Aug. 25 of cancer. Spouse: David C. Stonesifer (deceased). Parents: Joseph and Mary Byler Sharp. Child: Carol Stein. Funeral: Aug. 28 at Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa.

Unruh, Leona E. Nickel, 100, Newton, Kan., died Sept. 10. Spouse: Theodore Unruh (deceased). Parents: Peter P. and Susanna Schmidt Nickel. Children: Virgil, Bonnie Enns; four grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 14 at Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, Kan.

Unzicker, Goldie S. Mishler, 99, Eureka, Ill., died June 20, of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Andrew Unzicker (deceased). Parents: Wesley and Emma Schrock Mishler. Children: Violet Zoss, Marilyn Stauffer; 11 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; nine great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 24 at Roanoke Mennonite Church, Eureka.

Weaver, Arthur, 85, Tempe, Ariz., died Aug. 31. Spouse: Esther Hartzler Oyer Weaver. Spouse: Joan Yoder Weaver (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Laura Johns Weaver. Children: Timothy, Thomas, Brent; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 4 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Wolfe, Todd A., 44, Ephrata, Pa., died Sept. 10 of a brain tumor and complications. Spouse: Deanne L. Stephan Wolfe. Parents: Ray A. and Mary Lou Wyble Wolfe. Children: Bethany Wolfe, Addison Wolfe. Funeral: Sept. 19 at Landis Valley Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

Wyse, Donald J., 92, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 20. Spouse: Fern B. Stuckey Wyse. Parents: Jefferson C. and Emma Short Wyse. Children: Ross, Roxanna Kauffman, Ronda Doehrmann; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 25 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Wyse, Fern B. Stuckey, 88, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 20. Spouse: Donald J. Wyse. Parents: Daniel and Velma Christner Stuckey. Children: Ross, Roxanna Kauffman, Ronda Doehrmann; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 25 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Zook, John Edwin, MD, 84, Portland, Ore., died Aug. 14, of a thoracic aortic aneurysm. Spouse: Jeanne Pierson Zook. Parents: Abram Eyster and Frances Eunice Brenneman Zook. Children: Rebecca Claire Roth, Daniel John, Paul Michael; 11 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 29 at Peace Mennonite Church, Portland.

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Free-lance curriculum writers wanted. The **Gather 'Round curriculum**, a project of Mennonite Publishing Network and Brethren Press, is accepting applications to write for the 2011-12 year. Writers are needed for preschool (ages 3-4), primary (K-grade 2), middler (grades 3-5), junior youth (grades 6-8) and youth (grades 9-12). All writers will attend an orientation conference in April 2010 and begin writing thereafter, with deadlines staggered quarter by quarter. Writers prepare weekly materials for teacher's guides, student books and resource packs. Compensation varies according to the age group and the number of weeks (12-14) in a given quarter. For more information and to apply, visit the "Contact us" page at www.gatherround.org. Deadline for applications: Nov. 30, 2009.

Calgary First Mennonite Church, located in central Calgary, invites applications for a ***full-time lead pastor*** position. Our congregation seeks an applicant with a commitment to Mennonite theology and to the practices of the Mennonite church. We seek a spiritual leader with gifts of preaching, teaching and pastoral care. Related education and experience in pastoral leadership is a priority. Please direct resumés to our Pastor Search Committee contact, Marguerite Jack, at mjack@netkaster.ca.

Goshen College invites nominations and applications for the position of ***vice president for institutional advancement*** (VPIA). As the chief development officer, the VPIA fosters institutional sustainability and growth through team leadership and collaborates in implementing an integrated marketing structure that increases all sources of revenue. A bachelor's degree is required; an advanced degree is preferred. Broad-based and successful advancement leadership experience at a senior level is expected. For more information and to apply, please see the job announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment.

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Goshen College seeks a ***coordinator of Web marketing and new media innovation*** to oversee all strategic aspects of goshen.edu, including fund-raising and enrollment. Includes Web content production and Web project/marketing management. Bachelor's degree required; three years experience in Web design; advanced knowledge of XHTML, Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and current Web-design trends and techniques; experience in Web marketing and social media tools. For more information and to apply, see the position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment.

Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan., a congregation with 355 members, is seeking a ***full-time lead pastor.*** Contact Elam Peachey by email at Elamp@cox.net or phone 620-217-8149.

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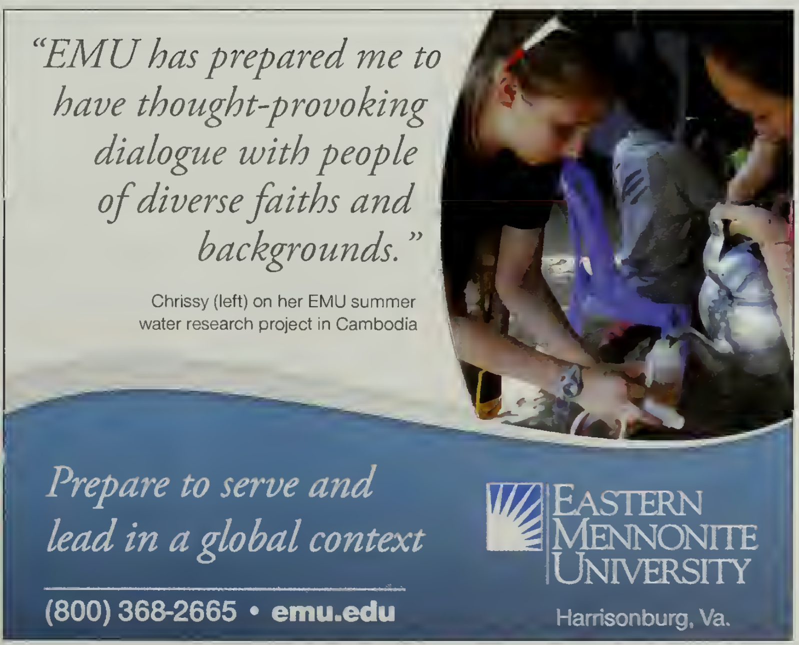
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Paying for and being paid for

Michael A. King, Telford, Pa., is publisher of Cascadia Publishing House LLC, editor of *DreamSeeker Magazine* and a pastor and speaker.

I don't know precisely how the U.S. health-care mess should be fixed. I don't know what God thinks of the devil in the details of that mad muddle. So I'm not seeking the one Solution.

But I am clinging to one core value: God cares about those who have less. As Christopher D. Marshall observes, "All the major legal collections of the Old Testament include protections for the poor," but it's hard "to find a single clause that specifically protects the rights of the wealthy and powerful" (*Crowned with Glory and Honor: Human Rights in the Biblical Tradition*, Pandora Press U.S., 2001). Whatever happens with health care, I believe it will have failed unless it somehow cares for "the least of these."

Getting from values to implementation is the trick. I think here of my own family life and what it may teach. One lesson is this: We need to listen to those who don't want to just offer people a free ride. If I dare vaguely touch on one situation, here's one scenario: After a person became an adult he still wanted to live for a while with his parents, and they welcomed that. But faced with a choice between doing more to help around the house or paying more rent, he chose rent. I believe (a) he made a legitimate choice, and (b) his parents correctly discerned that a healthy adult who also wants to be a household member will, one way or another, pull part of the weight.

Why wouldn't we want a society that invites paying our way when we can and helps pay our way when we can't?

I think of a family member who, due to decades struggling with mental illness, ran out of lifetime maximum insurance benefits long before she died. Her congregation and her insurance company entered conversation regarding how to restore her insurance. Eventually they agreed that (a) the congregation would pitch in significant funding, and (b) because of life-stage circumstances allowing leeway for it, the company would voluntarily interpret its rules to reset her lifetime benefits.

The adult son living at home has a good job. Why shouldn't he pay his way? The woman without insurance couldn't possibly have paid her way. Help me understand: Why wouldn't we want a society that does both? Why wouldn't we want a society that invites paying our way when we can and helps pay our way when we can't? Are we unable to conceptualize a world in which we simultaneously pay our way and are supported when we truly can't?

But as much as I think we can learn from family wrestlings with questions of tough love and accountability versus giving each other a leg up when life has broken too many legs, what still drives me is that God business. My parents often enough quoted the Thessalonians 3:10 admonition that if I didn't work I wouldn't eat, and I passed their teaching on to my children (by which time I liked it more). But adding Marshall convinces me that if we want God to be mixed in with our culture at all, then we're going to have to judge what happens to U.S. health care according to whether it both asks us to pay our way and pays our way, as circumstances dictate.

Marshall notes that in the "biblical tradition … the rights of three groups … are often singled out. … These are widows, orphans and the poor (e.g., Isaiah 10:1-2), sometimes together with … immigrants (Exodus 22:21-22; Deuteronomy 24:19-22). What these groups had in common … was their vulnerability." Marshall stresses the biblical concern to care particularly for those with no husband, parents, money. "Such persons," he writes, "possess rights in virtue of their essential humanity. 'The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is their Maker' (Proverbs 22:2; cf. 14:31)."

Juxtapose this with, "Why should I help pay for someone else?" Well, if your main concern is that government will bungle it, fine; we have lots to ponder regarding what government can or cannot do. But if you really mean it as you say it—it's not fair for you to have to pay except for yourself—then will you put your money where your mouth is? Will you insure yourself? Will you carry your own burden if you get sick?

If not, then might the answer be, "You should help pay for someone else because we're all in this together, and someday it could be you we pay for? Someday you could be the widow, orphan, poor person, stranger?"

No? You'll always have all you need? Then any chance you'll consider helping to pay someone else's way just because at least once upon a time that was what God-fearing people did?

RESOURCES

Learning from the Stranger: Christian Faith and Cultural Diversity by David I. Smith (Eerdmans, 2009, $20) articulates what "culture" is, discusses how cultural difference affects our perceptions and behavior and explores how Jesus' call to love our neighbor involves learning from cultural strangers.

The Devil Read Derrida and Other Essays on the University, the Church, Politics and the Arts by James K.A. Smith (Eerdmans, 2009, $18) deals with the challenges of secularization, with sex and consumerism, and comments on creative works, from *American Beauty* to Harry Potter to *A History of Violence* and the poetry of Franz Wright.

From Harm to Hope: Standing with Cluster Bomb Survivors (Mennonite Central Committee U.S., 2009) tells the story of the movement to ban cluster bombs through the experiences of survivors such as Raed Modaled of Lebanon and Phounsy Phasavaeng of Laos as well as through the voices of activists and MCC partners and staff members who help cluster bomb survivors. To purchase, borrow or preview the DVD and study guide, visit mcc.clusterbombs.org.

Invitation to the Jesus Life: Experiments in Christlikeness by Jan Johnson (NavPress, 2008, $14.99) offers 17 characteristics of Jesus that help people experience transformation in a fresh way. Johnson has written for *The Mennonite*.

Long After I'm Gone: A Father-Daughter Memoir by Deborah Good with Nelson Good (Cascadia Publishing House and Herald Press, 2009, $13.95) intertwines the voices of father and daughter as Nelson fights that cancer that will kill him while telling stories of seven projects, communities and organizations he has cared about.

A Persistent Voice: Marian Franz and Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation by Marian Franz and more, edited by Tim Godshall, David R. Bassett and Steve Ratzlaff (Cascadia Publishing House and Herald Press in association with Peace Tax Foundation, 2009, $19.95), includes essays that span Franz's 23 years of lobbying the U.S. Congress to enact the Peace Tax Fund Bill, which would allow conscientious objectors to pay taxes into a fund for nonmilitary purposes only.

A Hundred Camels: A Mission Doctor's Sojourn and Murder Trial in Somalia by Dr. Gerald L. Miller with Shari Miller Wagner (Cascadia Publishing House and Herald Press, 2009, $13.95) tells the story of a Mennonite mission doctor tried for a patient's murder. The surprising outcome involves the actions of a Somali family.

Mutual Treasure: Seeking Better Ways for Christians and Culture to Converse, edited by Harold Heie and Michael A. King (Cascadia Publishing House and Herald Press, 2009, $19.95), rejects both Christian withdrawal from and confrontational approaches to culture and calls for engaging others by building relationships of trust through which to seek mutual treasure.

Amish Peace: Simple Wisdom for a Complicated World by Suzanne Woods Fisher (Revell, 2009, $12.99) results from interviews with dozens of Amish to gain an understanding of their steadfast peace.

A Piece of Forever by Laurel Dee Gugler (James Lorimer & Co. Ltd., 2009, $8.95) is a junior novel featuring 10-year-old Rose, who must examine her beliefs about war. She does a school project about the bomb on Hiroshima, including the true story of Sadako, who died of radiation sickness 10 years after the bomb.

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Anna Groff

Sex trafficking happens around us

Due to ignorance or denial, many people perceive sexual exploitation as something that happens in faraway places, not near our homes or in our cities.

However, now that this summer's Delegate Assembly unanimously passed the Statement Against Human Trafficking, Modern Day Slavery, the next steps for church members include learning about and working against human trafficking.

The resolution—which passed due to the advocacy of Mennonite Women USA—reads, "12-18 thousand persons are victims in the United States."

Mennonite Church USA must fight trafficking not only worldwide but also locally, says Rhoda Keener, director of Mennonite Women USA who helped prepare the statement. "[Trafficking] is here in the United States as well as Thailand," she says.

What can we do? Keener says a group of people—regardless of the group's size—can support legislation against human trafficking. For example, one piece of legislation allows restoration to women who have been trafficked instead of imprisonment. Another law makes it possible to prosecute across national lines. Church leaders can send the Mennonite Church USA resolution to lawmakers in support of such legislation.

To learn more, I recommend watching the documentary *Very Young Girls* or find other resources on human trafficking. *Very Young Girls* haunted me with the stories of sexual exploitation victims in New York City.

Let's examine the assumptions we make toward the girls and women exploited by sex trafficking.

The average age that girls enter—or are forced into—prostitution is 13. One lawyer for a 15-year-old girl who had sex with 30 men said that since the girl is too young to legally consent to sex it's "a little absurd to have her charged as a prostitute."

The most difficult element of the documentary was to hear women express their desire to return to their pimp because they loved him, even though they admitted he was dangerous.

One former prostitute told her young sister who felt this way, "He's 30-something years old. He's got you mentally."

However, this dangerous dependency proves complicated. For example, the girls interviewed in the documentary explained the ways that their pimps treated them as their girlfriends or daughters—at times offering them a support network and resources lacking in their own families and homes.

"I felt like this was his body," one girl said.

Another step in addressing sex trafficking means acknowledging that many girls and women exploited by sex trafficking were forced or coerced by much older men while underage. Many of these girls come from some of the most vulnerable and troubled home environments. An economic, emotional or drug dependence on their pimp can bind a young woman to this lifestyle stronger than we want to admit.

Keener says trying to identify victims or survivors from a top-down approach is only minimally effective. However, there are four groups that, if educated, can help: medical, social services, law enforcement and faith communities. In fact, some individuals in our churches may feel called to direct intervention, Keener says.

We can also work at the Statement Against Human Trafficking, Modern Day Slavery resolution by examining the assumptions we make toward the girls and women exploited by sex trafficking and the decisions we make as consumers. For example, pornography as well as mainstream media abuse these women and perpetuate unfair assumptions of them. The sex industry thrives on the stereotypes consumers make. The resolution also speaks out against labor trafficking and calls us to avoid purchasing anything created through known labor trafficking

Let's remember Jesus' attitude of acceptance and love toward women—especially the most vulnerable—and do our best to show the same support even when it makes us feel uncomfortable. Doing so will break the bonds.—*ag*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

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October 20, 2009

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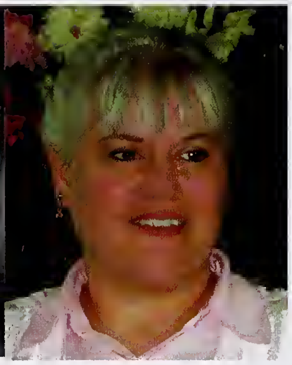
The missing piece



Donna Mast is co-pastor of Scottdale (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

The puzzle intrigued me. It was a photomosaic puzzle—thousands of tiny photos placed just so to create a picture of a wolf, then cut into 1,000 pieces to be put back together. And it was spread out on a table in the upstairs bedroom at my in-laws' house. I sat down and worked at it for a bit but could see this puzzle would take hours of work. I couldn't spend the precious three days we had with my husband's family holed up by myself working on a puzzle. So down I went to converse with people dear to me.

The next time we visited, months later, there was the puzzle again, out on the table, with perhaps a few more pieces nestled together but a far greater number of pieces waiting to be put in their proper place.

Several years and visits later, I saw the box sitting on a shelf, the puzzle still not completed. When I asked about the puzzle, I learned it had been a gift to my father-in-law. He had never managed to put it together. I asked him if he'd mind if I took it home to work on. He told me he had no hope of ever getting it together and would be delighted if I could finish it. So home it went.

Puzzles often sit out on a table at my house for a week—or a month for a really tough one. This puzzle sat out for close to half a year. It was agonizingly slow work and not much fun. I resorted to using a magnifying glass to search for each piece.

Then came the day I could see I would finally finish this puzzle. I went at it, sure it would be completed by bedtime. But something was wrong, I could see I would have more spaces than pieces. Sure enough, when I'd put in the last piece, there was a small hole. One piece was missing.

"Dad," I emailed, "I finished the puzzle, but I'm missing a piece. It isn't here. I've searched my house. Do you want to look for it at your house, or do you want me to glue the puzzle together without it?"

He responded that many of us go through life with missing pieces. He thought his own individual puzzle might be 75 percent missing. The puzzle was a mere .001 incomplete. How happy his wife would be if he could live at such a level of thoughtfulness and thoroughness. He ended his response with, "Glue that wonderful work of grace together and rejoice greatly."

How my father-in-law made me laugh! I thought about how Paul writes in Colossians of Jesus making us complete: "Don't let anyone lead you astray with empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the evil powers of this world, and not from Christ. For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body, and you are complete through your union with Christ. He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe" (Colossians 2:8-10 NLT).

St. Augustine put it this way, "Our souls are restless until they find their rest in You." Without Christ, we rest less. There is always something missing, and we are on the move, looking for something to fill the void. We may even find something to fill the void temporarily, but soon we are on the move, searching again, for only Christ completes us. Jesus is the missing piece that fits perfectly. In Jesus we can rest because Jesus completes us, uniting us with God. As Christians we can rejoice because through the work of Jesus, God, in grace, glues us together. This is true, both individually and as the church, the body of Christ. Jesus unites us and glues us together, placing all the individual pieces of our lives just so to create a beautiful picture.

"Glue that wonderful work of grace together and rejoice greatly."

TheMennonite

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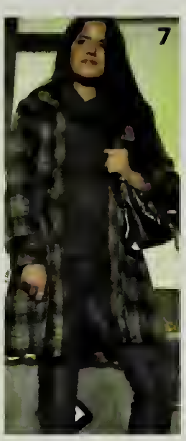

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Cover: Lower Falls of Yellowstone River, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. Photographer Dongfan Wang | Dreamstime.com

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Jesus' example in all things

While I agree with the premise of Tim Schultz's article on middle age ("Resurrection for the Second Half of Life," Sept. 15) and keeping your dreams alive, I couldn't help but think to myself: I hope when we reach that point and beyond we will be more concerned with becoming less judgmental, giving more forgiveness, lending encouragement, praying for those in need—giving pragmatic help when we can—becoming more peaceful and less argumentative, showing love to our neighbors, visiting the sick, praying for the unity of the Spirit and striving to follow the example of Jesus in all things.—*Sienna E. Raimonde, Orchard Park, N.Y.*

Troubled by health-care reform premises

I have put a great deal of thought into the editorial and Speaking Out column about the health-care reform issue (Sept. 1), and the conclusions I have reached trouble me immensely. There is first a premise that health-care reform needs to start at the insurance companies and place the shortcomings of the current system almost solely on them. Never have I been a fan of insurance companies and have often accused them of taking advantage of their customers. There are, however, two glaring omissions that I haven't seen addressed in Mennonite Church USA's resolution or in any of the current proposed legislation: the outrageous sums of money awarded in malpractice and liability suits and the mountain of mandates the government has placed on the insurance industry, many of which are unnecessary and often ridiculous. Both of these force insurance companies to cover things that are inapplicable to many of their customers, but the customers must pay for them just the same.

The second misplaced premise is a misunderstanding of what a "right" is in our country. Everett Thomas' editorial quotes Rick Stiffney from MHS Alliance saying, "We do support the migration of health care in the direction of [it being a] 'right' rather than a 'retail commodity.'" Rights differ from privileges in that they are given by an authority who is the only authority that can take them away. From the beginning of our country it was understood that our rights are bestowed on us by God, not the state. So rights could not be taken away by the state, thus the U.S. Constitution. When we start to say the rights are bestowed on us by the government, then the government also has the authority to strip those rights.—*Garlan Yoder, Churchville, Va.*

Vengeance is mine?

In Gordon Houser's fine Mediaculture column ("'Vengeance Is Mine' … or Is It?," Sept. 15) about the pervasiveness of violence and revenge in the media, he writes, "The Bible teaches throughout that God is to take vengeance; we are not."

I heartily agree with the last clause but fear that some may use the rest of the sentence to justify their own vengeful urges, i.e., to act like God acts. If God had body and bones, I do not believe that God would have one mean or vengeful bone in his body. Jesus did have body and bones and did a superb job of showing us what God is like. Maybe God does for our own benefit exercise a loving discipline for errant behavior. But does God take vengeance on anyone? Retaliate, seek revenge for our evil or wrong behavior? Never.—*John Asa Hertzler, Edinburg, Va.*

Gives credit to Roth and Koontz

I want to thank *The Mennonite* and Anna Groff for the Sept. 1 article on the Mennonite Artist Project and the interview with me on the tensions of working as a clothing designer and being Mennonite ("Clothing Designer Describes Tensions of Learning 'New Language' and Remembering 'Mother Tongue'"). I also want to acknowledge the important role played by John Roth and Ted Koontz that was not included in the condensed version of the interview. I was exposed to the concept of faith being a language, separate from other languages (in my case, the language of design) at a lecture by John Roth, who incorporated a reference to a January 2003 *Mennonite Quarterly Review* article by Ted Koontz ("Thinking Theologically About War Against Iraq"). Koontz' article was pivotal in providing me with a frame-

IN THIS ISSUE

Violence—and our responses to it—is the focus of several articles in the feature section. Ted Grimsrud (page 10) notes that "in the western world, we tend to set impersonal justice over against more relational concepts, such as love and peace and compassion. However, in biblical Hebrew … terms such as 'shalom' (peace, wholeness) and 'chesed' (steadfast love, compassion) are linked with 'mispat' (justice)." Becky Oberg explains the conundrum Jesus established when he told his followers to "turn the other cheek." In his world, turning the other cheek meant that the aggressor had little choice but to become an equal (page 11). Gerald Mast (page 16) suggests that the film *Silent Light* is a "plain old resurrection story, told with the Pentecostal glossolalia of Latin American magical realism in a Low German dialect." The news section includes the announcement that The Corinthian Plan will proceed in January 2010, and building for new denominational offices will get started next summer.—*Editor* work for how I could pursue clothing design without losing the connection to my roots—and I recommend it to others. So thanks to both John and Ted.—*Katherine Yoder, Brooklyn, N.Y.*

The Mennonite should maintain moratorium

Thank you for asking for our opinion about *The Mennonite* possibly becoming, once again, a forum for dissenting voices to square off on the issue of homosexuality and inclusion ("The Dangers of Dialogue," Sept. 15). I respectfully request that you maintain the current policy of not letting the publication become a sounding board for the most vociferous and best-organized groups on both sides of the issue. If you apply your taxonomy of standards to this discussion, I think you'll come to the conclusion that few of us will engage in this discussion with the intention of opening ourselves to fundamental change of perspective. Instead, "dialogue" will again become little more than people lobbing bigger and bigger grenades over the fence at each other and ratcheting up a state of hyper vigilance and hyper activism by individuals in both parties.

As the editorial mentioned, almost 20 percent of the readership left in 1999 and 2000 due, in no small part, to the open forum *The Mennonite* had become. A move now to remove the moratorium will turn the letters page into an unwelcome battlefield and lead to another mass exodus of readers. —*David Martino, Milton, Pa.*

Lift the moratorium

I am writing in response to the editorial in the Sept. 15 edition of *The Mennonite.* I encourage the board of directors to consider lifting the moratorium on publishing letters that address the church's stance on homosexuality. I believe it is fair and appropriate to maintain guidelines regarding the tone of such letters and to limit the number of such letters published in each issue.

Beyond lifting the moratorium, I encourage you to actively promote healthy dialogue on the issue of homosexuality and the church. What if you published letters on the topic in pairs—people respectfully representing different perspectives? What if you published a healthy, respectful dialogue on this issue as a feature story? Find two articulate, respected leaders within Mennonite Church USA to engage in an email dialogue and edit it for publication?

At Columbus 2009, the delegates (of which I was one) approved a resolution that seeks to encourage discussion of this issue within our congregations and within the broader denomination. I believe *The Mennonite* has an important role to play in facilitating this dialogue—however dangerous it may be. With gratitude for your work on behalf of the church.—*Joanna Harader, Lawrence, Kan.*

Maintain the moratorium

Thanks for soliciting for reader feedback as you consider lifting the moratorium. As a lifetime reader of *Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite,* I am quite pleased with your ongoing decision to keep the moratorium in place. I observe that the banter published prior to the moratorium was nonproductive.

I have spent my entire career in corporate America, where I have learned that some organizational conflicts and polarizing issues are best dealt with in nonwritten form. In fact, most productive mediations are done around a table with both parties present along with a live mediator—not via written letters between adversaries brokered by a well-meaning editor. I am not convinced we will ever "self-mediate" on this particular issue. But I am convinced that if we come to some agreements it will not be initially via an ongoing series of 100-word written repartee. The issue and conflict is still too emotionally charged by polar opposites. Mennonite Church USA is making strides at listening to each other on the issue. But only by first building strong relationships and sitting across the table talking to each other, not by reading and

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

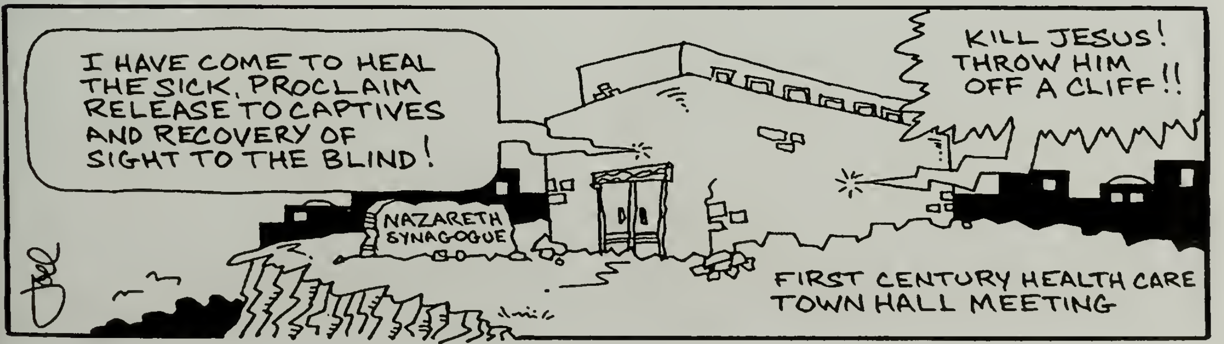
Regarding the war in Afghanistan: (60 votes)

- ○ U.S. troops should leave now (65%)
- ○ U.S. troops should stay until the country is more stable (27%)
- ○ Not sure (8%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Readers Say continues on page 31.

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


I HAVE COME TO HEAL THE SICK, PROCLAIM RELEASE TO CAPTIVES AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND!
KILL JESUS! THROW HIM OFF A CLIFF!!
NAZARETH SYNAGOGUE
FIRST CENTURY HEALTH CARE TOWN HALL MEETING

IN BRIEF

Gun center closes

Colosimo's Gun Center, Philadelphia, closed Sept. 30 under a plea agreement reached in federal court on Sept. 28. A January peace conference that Mennonite Church USA sponsored demonstrated at this gun shop. Owner James Colosimo entered a guilty plea before U.S. district judge Timothy Savage on behalf of Colosimo's Inc., on charges of making false statements and failing to properly maintain firearms transaction records. Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert Reed said investigators found that "people working on behalf of Colosimo were selling guns to individuals who certainly should not have received them." —*Therese Miller*

Random violence

Most hate crimes in the United States are committed by youth with no connections to hate groups. One researcher has classified hate-crime perpetrators into three groups: reactionists, who are interested in protecting their resources from intruders; mission offenders, who appeal to a higher authority as they attempt to eradicate what they believe is an inferior group; and thrill seekers (the largest group), who are motivated by boredom, a desire for fun or a desire to feel strong.—*The Christian Century*

Southeast Conference revokes credentials

GOSHEN, Ind.—The longest-serving pastor in Southeast Mennonite Conference (SMC) has lost his ministerial credentials. On Sept. 15, the conference revoked the credentials for Randy Spaulding, pastor of Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota, Fla., in response to his disclosure of his desire to pursue a covenanted same-sex relationship. Spaulding has been a pastor in SMC for 18 years.

The Leadership Board cited Spaulding's decision and "Mennonite Church USA guidelines regarding human sexuality" as the bases for the disciplinary action and asked Spaulding to resign voluntarily. When he refused, the conference withdrew his credentials.

"I am not surprised at these actions taken by the conference," Spaulding wrote in a Sept. 24 letter to the Leadership Board, conference pastors and congregations. "I recognize and respect the conservative nature of our conference in its theology, membership and its understanding of sexual orientation. … I am, however, deeply disappointed and saddened in the lack of process and the lack of healthy dialogue that the LB has engaged in with me and my congregation."

Debra Gingerich, church council chair, sent a letter to SMC on Sept. 22 expressing surprise at the sudden nature of the decision and said, "Our congregation needs time to consider what is God's will for our church at this time."

Gingerich also promised a formal congregational response to the SMC action by Nov. 30, the date originally set by the Leadership Board for Spaulding to resign.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Rainer Lang/ACT

MCC appeals for donations to Asia disaster victims

Machinery is staged in Padang, Indonesia, ready to remove rubble after earthquake damage on Sept. 30 and Oct. 1. Mennonite Central Committee representatives are in Padang assessing how MCC can be most helpful. MCC is also appealing for donations.—*MCC*

Guyton new Intercultural Relations minister

Glen Guyton

NEWTON, Kan.—Glen Guyton, former director of student ministries for Calvary Community Church in Hampton, Va., is the new denominational minister for Intercultural Relations for Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership. Guyton grew up Presbyterian and is a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo. His first station of duty was in Hampton, where he began attending Calvary. Guyton's role is to help the denomination be a more antiracist church. He is a former member of Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Mennonite World Conference faces changes

STRASBOURG, France—Mennonite World Conference North American offices are about to change. The call for "reshaping MWC offices and staffing" was one of the goals of the Program Plan 2009-2012 approved by the General Council in Paraguay in July.

The office in Kitchener, Ont., will become MWC's North American headquarters, headed by Albert C. Lobe, MWC North America representative. Ray Brubacher, international coordinator for Assembly 15, who worked from the Kitchener office, will retire at the end of October. Margaret Brubacher, who also worked from the Kitchener office as an administrative assistant in planning and facilitating global assemblies, has completed her work. Additionally, the Fresno, Calif., office will close at the end of 2009. Pakisa Tshimika will complete his role as associate general secretary at that time, moving from a permanent staff role to an occasional assignment as global church advocate. With the closing of the Fresno office, Dennis Becker will complete his work as executive assistant to Tshimika.—*MWC*

New denominational team commissioned

NEWTON, Kan.—Members of the One Voice team commissioned and anointed denominational ministers during a day of celebration and blessing Sept. 22 in Kansas City, Mo. The gathering was organized as part of the Sept. 24-25 meetings that brought together the boards of Mennonite Church USA agencies. The eight denominational ministers are supported both by Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership and Mennonite Mission Network, representing an intentional recommitment to relationships among denominational agencies.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Photo provided

ilton Mennonite church holds fashion show for girls

tie Nolt walks the runway in the Oct. 4 fashion show at
mmunity Mennonite Fellowship, Milton, Pa., called
flected Beauty—emphasizing inner beauty. Young women
dress fashionably and modestly, said organizer Karen
ker. Fourteen girls participated as models, and 200 people
m the church and community attended. The speaker was
rtha Kleinbauer Kelly.—*Community Mennonite Fellowship*

Church historian leaves book legacy with EMU

HARRISONBURG, Va.,—Irvin B. Horst, 94, donated or sold 12,000 or more books to Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and contributed in numerous other ways to the school over a 60-year period. Horst, professor emeritus of church history at EMU, devoted much time and energy to acquiring both rare and contemporary books to enrich the collections in the Menno Simons Historical Library in Hartzler Library.

Among the most significant acquisitions are two Jan Luiken collections of 100 and 35 items, respectively, including the 1685 illustrated Dutch *Martyrs' Mirror*, a Menno Simons collection (66 items) of materials from the 16th to the 20th centuries both by and about Menno Simons and an annuity book collection of 197 items, a "gift" for which Horst receives an annual payment of a percentage of the appraised value.—*EMU*

Mennonite Publishing Network names editors

WINNIPEG, Man.—Sharon K. Williams begins a new assignment as editor of *Adult Bible Study*, produced by Mennonite Publishing Network, and Carol Duerksen is the new editor of *Purpose* magazine. Williams and Duerksen replace the retiring James E. Horsch, who has edited *Adult Bible Study* and *Purpose* since 1984. They began their new assignments in early October.

Williams, of Norristown, Pa., is the minister of worship at Nueva Vida Norristown New Life Mennonite Church. Duerksen, a member of Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan., edited *With* magazine for 18 years and is a writer and editor for *Gather 'Round* and more.—*MPN*

CPT members denied entry to Israel

AT-TUWANI, Palestine—On Sept. 25, Israeli authorities at Ben Gurion airport, Tel Aviv, denied entry to Christian Peacemaker Teams member Seán O'Neill. In response to inquiries from O'Neill's lawyer, the Israeli authorities stated that the ban was due to a court appearance by O'Neill and Joe Wyse (to whom the Israeli authorities denied entry earlier this month) in March, despite the fact that an Israeli judge had ordered them released without charges.

On March 8, O'Neill and Wyse videotaped Israeli settlers constructing a road on privately owned Palestinian land near Karmel settlement in the South Hebron Hills but were then detained overnight at a police station in Hebron.—*CPT*

MCC makes call to prayer, action for Honduras

AKRON, Pa.—Given the political turmoil in Honduras, the Latin America and Caribbean program department of Mennonite Central Committee asks for prayer and for people to call on their own governments to pressure Honduran authorities to act in ways that will bring peace. MCC personnel are concerned about the June 28 military-led coup that deposed President Jose Manuel Zelaya and the subsequent actions of both the de facto government headed by Roberto Micheletti and the ousted president.

As the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña (Honduran Evangelical Mennonite Church) said in a July 3 public statement, "What remains after the events of Sunday, June 28, is a divided and polarized Honduran society, living in a climate of uncertainty, insecurity and violence."—*MCC*

Virginia sale raises slightly less than last year

HARRSIONBURG, Va.—The 43rd annual Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale was held Oct. 2-3 at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds. Preliminary receipts totaled $283,246 for the worldwide relief and service program of Mennonite Central Committee. Last year's sales total was $307,683. This year's funds included approximately $21,823 from the "Penny Power" project, in which people collect coins to donate.—*Jim Bishop*

—compiled by Anna Groff

IN BRIEF

International church theme for winning essays

Tied first-place winners for this year's John Horsch Mennonite History Essay Contest, sponsored by the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee, were "Fragile Bonds and Global Brotherhood: The Ninth Mennonite World Conference in Curitiba, Brazil" by Meredith Lehman of Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., and "Identity in the Midst of Instability: An Analysis of the Oppositional Relationship Between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Meserete Kristos Church in the 1960s-1980s" by Lydette Assefa of Goshen (Ind.) College. *—Mennonite Church USA*

SMC names first woman moderator

Dawn Yoder Graber of Sarasota, Fla., became the first woman and the first nonordained moderator of Southeast Mennonite Conference on Oct. 3. Delegates to the conference assembly held at Lakewood Retreat unanimously affirmed Graber to fill the two years remaining in the three-year term of outgoing moderator Marlin Birkey. Graber had been acting moderator since Birkey resigned for health reasons in August. The new moderator teaches Bible at Sarasota Christian School and is a member of Bahia Vista Mennonite Church in Sarasota.—*Richard K. MacMaster*

Healing justice

In July 1997, the state of Virginia executed Joseph O'Dell. According to Helen Prajean's book *The Death of Innocents*, Joseph O'Dell was almost certainly innocent of the crime for which he was killed.

by Ted Grimsrud

When O'Dell was on trial, he realized that the court-appointed lawyer had no interest in defending him, so out of desperation he defended himself—inevitably ineffectively.

After O'Dell's conviction and death sentence, he did get help—including a DNA test that undermined the state's scanty evidence linking him to the crime. But this new evidence was not allowed to be considered. The state and the courts clearly were not interested in truly determining what happened; they wanted a conviction and an execution.

Our system rewards prosecutors who gain capital convictions; people in power are impatient with what they see as inefficient delays in the exercise of the machinery of punishment, so they make it harder and harder for those convicted of crimes to gain a new hearing. This is true even as dozens upon dozens of convicted people have been shown to be innocent due to DNA testing in recent years.

People feel an urgency that makes them impatient with anything that delays the "gratification" that comes from the exercise of retribution.

There is something that undergirds these dynamics of state-sponsored killing. A general sensibility in our society that "justice" requires vengeance, punishment, pain for pain. People feel an urgency that makes them impatient with anything that delays the "gratification" that comes from the exercise of retribution. This urgency almost guarantees the kinds of abuse that happened with Joseph O'Dell.

After O'Dell's death, the people in Palermo, Italy, requested that he be buried there. His gravestone says this: "Joseph Roger O'Dell, honorary citizen of Palermo, killed by Virginia, USA, in a brutal and merciless justice system."

'Criminal injustice system': "Brutal and merciless" do not actually belong together with "justice." Certainly what we call our "criminal justice system" is to an unconscionable degree "brutal and merciless." To the extent this is so, though, we have a system not of genuine justice but rather a "criminal injustice system."

Recent years have seen an expansion of the destructive dynamics of retribution. Forty years ago, our rate of imprisonment was about 100 prisoners per 100,000 people in the general population—one of the highest in the world, but in the same general ballpark as most other countries in the West. But now, our rate is off the charts in relation to these other countries—over 700 prisoners per 100,000 and still growing rapidly.

Not only has it become good politics to send people to prison, it has also become big business. More and more prison systems are being privatized. This provides great incentive to build more prisons, send more people to jail, make it harder to get out and the prison experience more and more devastating. When more prisoners mean more profits, why should the prison-industrial complex seek to rehabilitate and restore?

This is crazy. We have this huge public expense of tax monies for the building and sustaining of prisons. At the same time, the prison system actually undermines public safety. Even with our ever-harsher sentencing, most convicts are released at some point, and most commit crimes again and end up back in prison. Prisons teach violence. Good for business but not good for the health of our society.

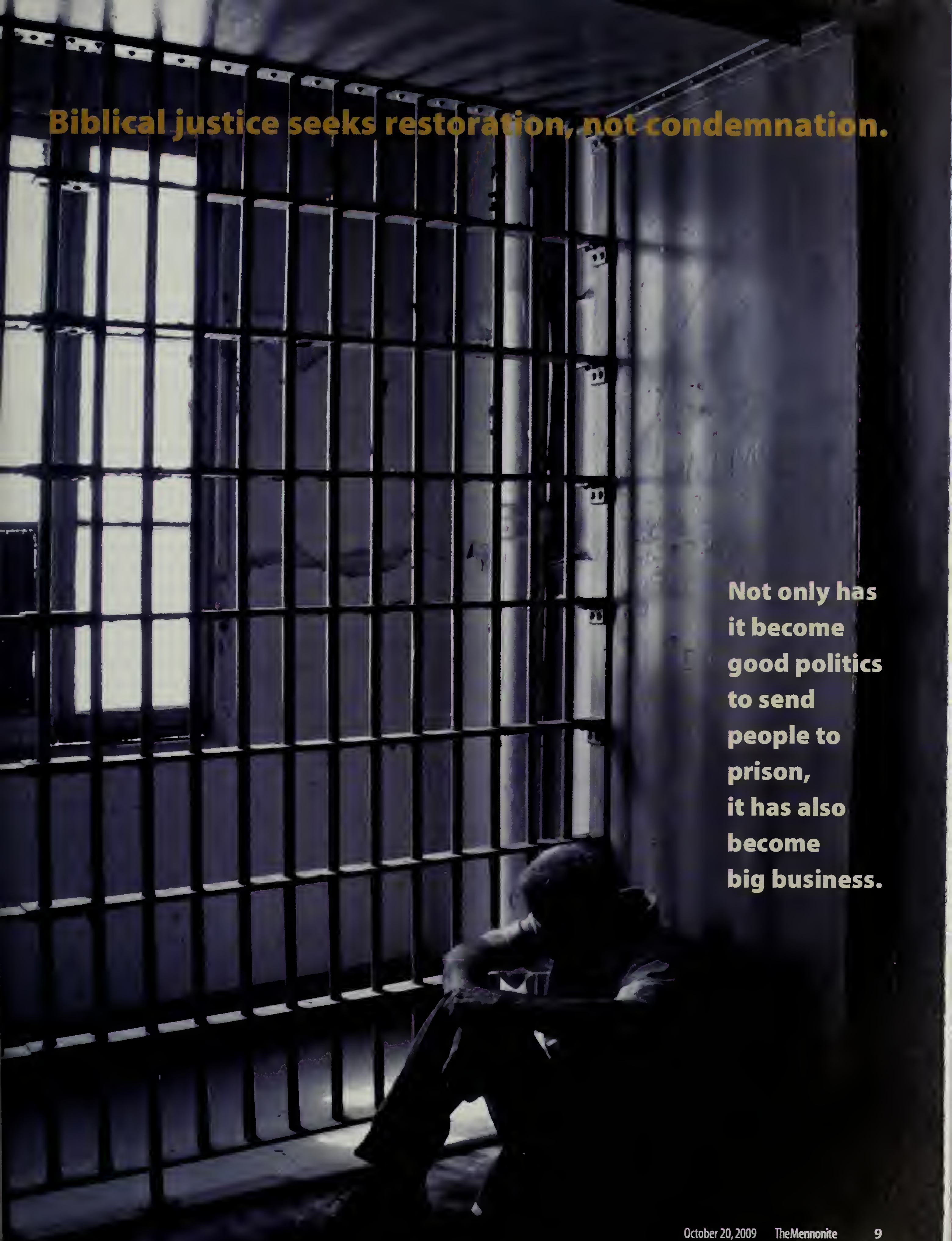
Why do we put up with this? There is much public ignorance and many behind-the-scenes decisions made by people in power. But we also have a retributive mindset in our culture. This mindset makes people want offenders to be convicted of crimes so that those convicts will suffer.

This retributive mindset has some roots in Christian theology. This is how the logic of retribution works: God is understood in terms of impersonal, inflexible holiness. God's law is seen to be the unchanging standard by which sin is measured. God's response to sin is punitive. God simply cannot countenance any kind of sin.

God is not free to act with unconditional mercy

Continued on page 10

Biblical justice seeks restoration, not condemnation.



Not only has
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good politics
to send
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prison,
it has also
become
big business.

Continued from page 8

and compassion toward rebellious human beings. Simply to forgive would violate God's holiness. Compassion without satisfaction is not possible for God. As theologian Millard Erickson writes, "For God to remove or ignore the guilt of sin without requiring a payment would in effect destroy the very moral fiber of the universe, the distinction between right and wrong."

Retributive violence: In this understanding of the nature of God, the logic of retribution indeed leads to acceptance of "justifiable violence." Retributive violence is required in response to wrongdoing.

This dynamic only reinforces the spiral of violence. The logic of retribution feeds the spiral: violence leading to more violence leading to more violence. The logic of retribution blinds us Americans to how our criminal justice system has become so unjust.

Biblical justice is distinct from biblical punitive judgment; it is the antidote for judgment, not the fuel for judgment.

Here is where restorative justice enters—as a breath of hope and fresh air. It started as a practical exercise, on the ground, trying to find a way to help victims and offenders find a measure of healing. Now it becomes a theological challenge: Can we reformulate our understanding of justice (our theology) and free ourselves from the straitjacket of the logic of retribution?

In a word, yes. And it won't be that difficult—at least on an intellectual level. We have strong evidence from the Bible itself in favor of a theology of justice that is clearly and strongly restorative. Let me illustrate by looking briefly at only a few Scripture texts.

In the western world, we tend to set impersonal justice over against more relational concepts, such as love and peace and compassion. However, in biblical Hebrew, you have terms such as "shalom" (peace, wholeness) and "chesed" (steadfast love, compassion) linked with "mispat" (justice).

'Justice and peace will kiss': Psalm 85 expresses this beautifully: God will speak peace to God's people; to those who are faithful, salvation is at hand; "steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other" (85:10)—another translation reads "justice and peace shall embrace." This picture of wholeness presents justice, love and peace as being together, different terms for the one reality of salvation. So, our first point about biblical justice is that it complements love, compassion, shalom, forgiveness and salvation.

But what about judgment, justice as retribution? Certainly the Bible (and not only the Old Testament) tells about judgment, about consequences for violating shalom. But notice something from Amos. Amos certainly threatens judgment, but this judgment does not define justice. It is something different.

Justice, in Amos, is the solution; it is what the community should (must) seek. Justice is about life. Let justice roll down like waters, like an ever-flowing stream (5:24). Water is the basis for life. Injustice is like wormwood; it is a poison. Justice is like water; it is a life-giving force. Judgment is not "justice"—it is what happens when there is no justice. Justice is about healing; justice is about transformation, not about punishing.

The key to the book of Amos is its final few verses, which portray restoration and healing. Many scholars see this vision as something added to the book later, arguing that it contradicts the earlier message of punitive judgment. I would say this final vision actually tells us what the purpose of justice is—restoration, not punishment. By taking this vision of healing seriously, we see that the message of the book as a whole is not a punitive one but one of hope—justice as restoration.

The second point is that biblical justice is distinct from biblical punitive judgment; it is the antidote for judgment, not the fuel for judgment. Justice seeks restoration, not condemnation.

The New Testament reinforces this message. Romans 3:21-25 tells us that justice is linked closely with salvation. The justice of God has been disclosed as the power for salvation for all people. Paul has demonstrated in Romans that all types of people are sinful and need God's mercy. Now he insists that God indeed has shown us this mercy.

Power for life: God's justice remains a power for life. We see that in the most powerful way possible in the life and teaching of Jesus—and if we truly see Jesus, we will be freed from (redeemed from) the powers of injustice, idolatry and violence that Paul describes earlier in Romans.

A third point about biblical justice is that it is the power of salvation. We see saving justice most clearly in the life of Jesus. When we truly trust in and seek to embody God's justice disclosed in Jesus we will be freed from our sinful practices of injustice (just as those Amos spoke to would be were they to let justice roll down like water).

True justice, according to the Bible, is not about retribution and punishment but about restoration of relationships and finding healing. Restorative justice heals our brokenness and heals our understandings of justice.

Ted Grimsrud teaches at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

What does it mean to turn the other cheek?

A crash course in nonviolence

by Becky Oberg

There were no two ways about it—K (name withheld) was a bully. At 500 pounds, she intimidated her fellow psychiatric patients with a foul mouth, boasts about her time in jail for assaulting her mother and sheer intimidation. Even staff members were afraid of her. She was known to become physically aggressive to staff, often elbowing them if they refused to give her extra food.

How does one deal with such a threat?

There was another patient on the ward—B, a former martial artist who had become a Mennonite after being medically discharged from the U.S. Army. She was five feet tall and weighed about 170 pounds but carried herself with an aura of confidence. She handled K the same way one would handle an irate pit bull—by staying out of the way.

One day B asked to use the phone for a business call. K began cursing B, and staff quickly separated them. A few minutes later, however, K made derogatory comments toward B. B firmly stated she did not appreciate the language or the threats. K moved within a couple of inches of B, and growled, "Move."

B stood firm. "No," she said.

K shoved B as hard as she could. According to witnesses, B's feet left the floor, she sailed backwards a good four feet, landed on the tile floor and bounced. B's martial arts training enabled her to spread the impact out and cushion her head somewhat, but she still sustained injuries to her head, neck, shoulders, back and pelvis. One attending physician compared B's injuries to being hit by a car. It seemed that B's courageous stand was proof that nonviolence didn't work.

But it did. Something suddenly enabled everyone on the unit—staff and patients alike—to say no to K. Staff no longer tolerated her violence, and began documenting each incident. K was placed on violent behavior protocol, then transferred off the unit. The police took a report and criminal charges, as of this writing, were pending. The administration also put new rules in place. Unit life improved because one soft-spoken pacifist refused to take revenge.

What does it mean to "turn the other cheek"? In ancient Hebrew culture, men insulted an enemy by striking him with the back of their right hands. To turn the other cheek would force the attacker into a dilemma. Since the left hand was considered unclean, he couldn't strike with the left hand without degrading himself. To strike the other cheek, he would either have to use the palm of his right hand or punch his victim—both of which were statements of equality. Perhaps Jesus was encouraging us to nonviolently show our enemies they're in the wrong.

Ghandi said, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." By following the law of love given to us by Christ, we not only avoid blinding the world, but we show them the light of Christ.

Becky Oberg attends First Mennonite Church in Indianapolis.

B's feet left the floor, she sailed backwards a good four feet, landed on the tile floor and bounced.

Popa Sorin | Dreamstime.com

Reach out to

Reflections from a CPE student and hospi

by Pat Schosser

In 2004, I began my Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) experience at a Veterans Administration (VA) medical center. For two years I worked at this facility's hospice program. I was interested in becoming a bereavement counselor for hospice. As a student chaplain, I could not proselytize. I had to respect a variety of beliefs, though I was not required to participate in his or her practices if someone was of a different faith and needed a chaplain. I could get someone to fulfill those obligations. I did not have to proselytize. I watched God in action.

We must learn to separate the veteran from the war.

I could tell the veterans God loved them. If it opened conversation, the Spirit had already prepared them. If not, then they were not ready to hear. The VA required a visit to each patient admitted to the hospital or nursing home. When we approached veterans for the first time, on admission, we asked several questions as to who they were and if they belonged to a particular faith. From their responses, sometimes we could tell if this was a conversation that may need to be addressed.

Some veterans blatantly said they wanted nothing more to do with us. We respected this. In one conversation I asked the patient, "What would it take for you to believe?" He told me. I said I would pray for that for him. I still pray for him. Some patients did not want to talk about faith; some avoided me or just talked about other things. This was fine because my emphasis was to show God's love and let his Spirit do the work. I asked friends to pray for the work, giving no names.

Some responses were mild and more difficult to discern how close to God they felt. Questions like, "Would you like for us to contact your pastor" and, "Do you want us to contact anyone" helped find what kind of social support they had. We made sure we visited those with little or no support. We made follow-up visits to those having surgery and those who requested a visit. We also visited hospital staff in difficult situations.

Music: As a hospice volunteer, I regularly visited patients/residents. One patient was a retired chaplain I visited for support, prayer and encouragement. I took my guitar and asked if they wanted to hear music. Music opened doors that otherwise have been closed to me. I played quiet music, more in the classical style. I did not push but asked if they had any requests. If there was doubt, I invited them to listen to a song. Then they could tell me if they wanted more or not. Some were afraid I might play loud; they did not want loud music. For some patients I just asked the questions I was to ask on each visit:

1. How are you feeling?
2. What do you need to make your stay more pleasant? (I reported this to the chaplain's office.)
3. Any complaints? (I also reported this to the chaplain's office.)
4. What yet needs to be done?

Before I left I asked if they had any prayer requests; I kept them in my prayers. When patients were not in their rooms, I left cards, encouraging them and stating I would pray for them during the week.

A Jewish patient in the end told me she "had prayed the Lord's Prayer" when I asked her if there was anything yet to be done. One patient said there were too many rules in church about dress and so forth. I replied, "You have not been in

veterans

lunteer in a VA medical center

church lately." When our church came to sing, I pointed out our pastor, who was not wearing a suit and tie. When I asked this patient if he had a request, he asked for "Just a Closer Walk With Thee" and "Amazing Grace."

A study on music says, "Music can bring hope to an unpredictable world." Many requested hymns. I was often asked to play "Jesus Loves Me." A resident with dementia asked for "O How I Love Jesus" and sang the chorus even as the dementia robbed him of the rest of his memory. One weak patient became energized as he taught me a song I did not know.

Residents not in hospice asked me to play for them. We met in the lounge near the nurse's station. One resident shared with me how music had brought him out of a coma. An older resident asked me to play a variety of hymns; a group of patients gathered. He asked if there were hymnals we could use. The activities director opened the door where hymnals were kept for Sunday, and we passed them out. That day about 20 men gathered, singing old hymns such as "I'll Fly Away" and "Amazing Grace."

Music opened doors that otherwise have been closed to me.

PTSD: I became aware through research the impact of natural life events such as deaths of loved ones can have on a veteran's life. Veterans who did not have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) had symptoms and sought help after 9/11 and when the Gulf War and the Iraq War began.

What is PTSD? One writer says: "Survivors of (life-threatening) trauma may be angry, irritable or depressed. If symptoms continue longer than a month, PTSD is diagnosed." The definition of PTSD keeps changing, but basically it is delayed

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www.sxc.hu

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grief and regret due to the effects of trauma. Trauma often leaves an individual emotionally at the age he or she was at the time of the trauma. Isolation is often a result of PTSD.

The current wars with Iraq and Afghanistan are going to yield their own unique problems. War is hell; however, those involved are still some of God's precious children. We must learn to separate the veteran from the war. Not every one is "evil." God still sees potential in every individual. We are at war because someone decided that the "other" was evil, insinuating that we are "good." The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Some veterans have seen atrocities. Guilt can come from just surviving when others were killed. The relationship of a soldier to his or her comrades is similar to that of Jonathan and David. The path back to wholeness can be a long one. It takes a community to help in that healing.

Needed are those who are willing to show compassion, listen and make time for veterans.

Here are some good resources:

- John Shay's *The Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*;
- William Mahedy's *Out of the Night: the Spiritual Journey of Vietnam Vets*;
- NCPTSD: www.ncptsd.va.gov/; NCPTSD@va.gov.

Part of my training was "Listen and Love," from which came "Listen, Care and Be Aware."

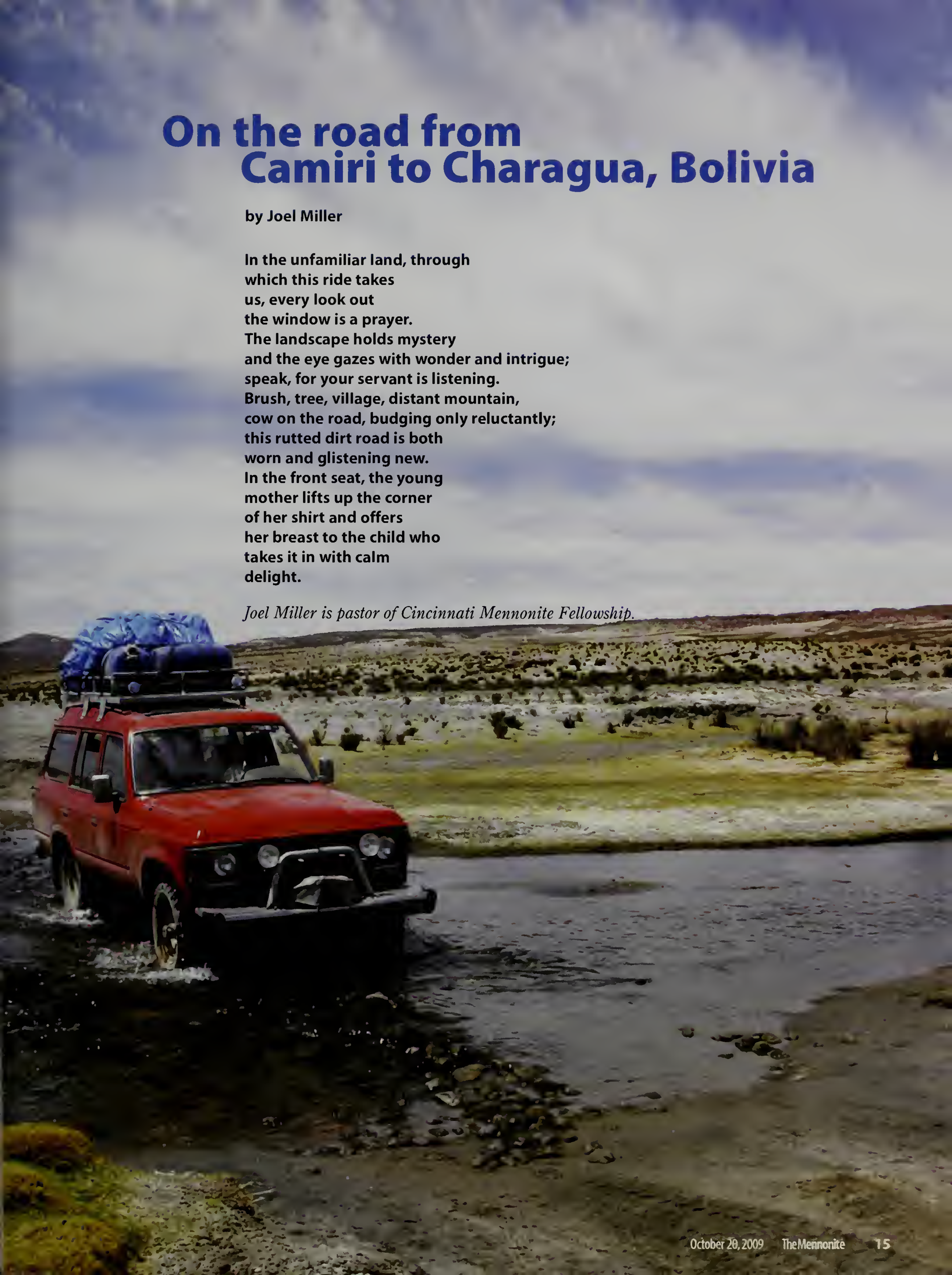
Listen: Listening is the greatest part of your ministry to the veteran. Needed are people "who are natural healers, those who have time to listen." The word compassion means "to suffer with." How can you help if you do not know what is happening? Listening provides the veteran with the opportunity to share with you when he or she is ready. It is not something you can fix. Healing is in God's timing. Building trusting relationships take a long time, yet that is what the veteran needs. Do not try to "fix it" with Scripture. Scripture has its place but given at the wrong times sounds like you are in a hurry and not really interested. Listen also to the veteran's family.

Care: You show care by giving feedback. Feedback is when you state what you heard in order to get clarification, to understand better. This also helps minimize misunderstandings. Give time for the individual to answer if you ask questions. You do not want to cause any more spiritual pain by giving wrong advice. If the veteran shows emotion, share that emotion; do not try to fix it by saying something. Share the moment. If you say anything, say, "Wait a while." Then say, "Thanks for sharing that with me." Treat it like a treasure. It is. Care also for the veteran's family.

Be aware of current events in a veteran's life. How do current events, such as 9/11 and wars, affect one who has experienced combat or other trauma. Be aware of possible triggers. How are these triggers affecting him or her? A murder, war or death of a relative can affect a veteran in surprising ways, even to him or her. Also be aware of the stage of life the veteran is in. Retirement and death of a spouse can trigger PTSD. Be aware of how grief affects us. Be aware that you will need good boundaries for yourself to prevent burnout. Then witness God in his work. You do not have to convince the veteran; that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

How can we as Mennonites, who likely have not experienced the trauma of war, reach out to veterans? We state in our vision that the church is a place of healing and hope. Community is important for healing; families of the veterans may need support, too, not just the veteran. Those who are more aloof are the ones who need us to reach out to them. Families of veterans who do not admit needing help may need help the most. Discomfort is often part of the scenario for those who give care. Needed are those who are willing to show compassion, listen and make time for veterans. One writer says, "Until suffering is seen as something to be heard and not a problem to be solved (or fixed), the pain people feel as they die may never see the light of day." Is this not the work of the church? Our vision is of healing and hope.

Pat Schosser lives in Burnsville, N.C.



On the road from Camiri to Charagua, Bolivia

by Joel Miller

In the unfamiliar land, through
which this ride takes
us, every look out
the window is a prayer.
The landscape holds mystery
and the eye gazes with wonder and intrigue;
speak, for your servant is listening.
Brush, tree, village, distant mountain,
cow on the road, budging only reluctantly;
this rutted dirt road is both
worn and glistening new.
In the front seat, the young
mother lifts up the corner
of her shirt and offers
her breast to the child who
takes it in with calm
delight.

Joel Miller is pastor of Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship.

A plain resu

Mennonite themes in the film *Silent Light*

by Gerald J. Mast

Ever since the 1955 Broadway production of the musical *Plain and Fancy*, the drama of encounters between the "plain" ways of life associated with conservative Anabaptist communities and the "fancy" habits of late-capitalist consumer culture has attracted substantial theater audiences. David Weaver-Zercher, who has studied the history of popular representations of the Amish, traces the appearance of this story in fiction back to the 1905 novel by Helen Martin, *Tillie a Mennonite Maid*. That story continues to be told in a growing host of popular novels, from the Amish romances of Beverly Lewis to the Amish mysteries of P.L. Gaus.

The film *Silent Light* marks a new development in the history of images of plain people in popular culture.

The film *Silent Light* (available on DVD), directed by Mexican filmmaker Carlos Reygadas, arguably marks a new development in the history of images of plain people in popular culture. On the one hand, it incorporates the standard pastoral scenes we have come to expect in such films—farmers in the field harvesting, the family praying and eating around the dining room table, milking in the barn, flocks of beautiful children in plain outfits, and the slightly awkward postures of people who do not appear to be at home in the world.

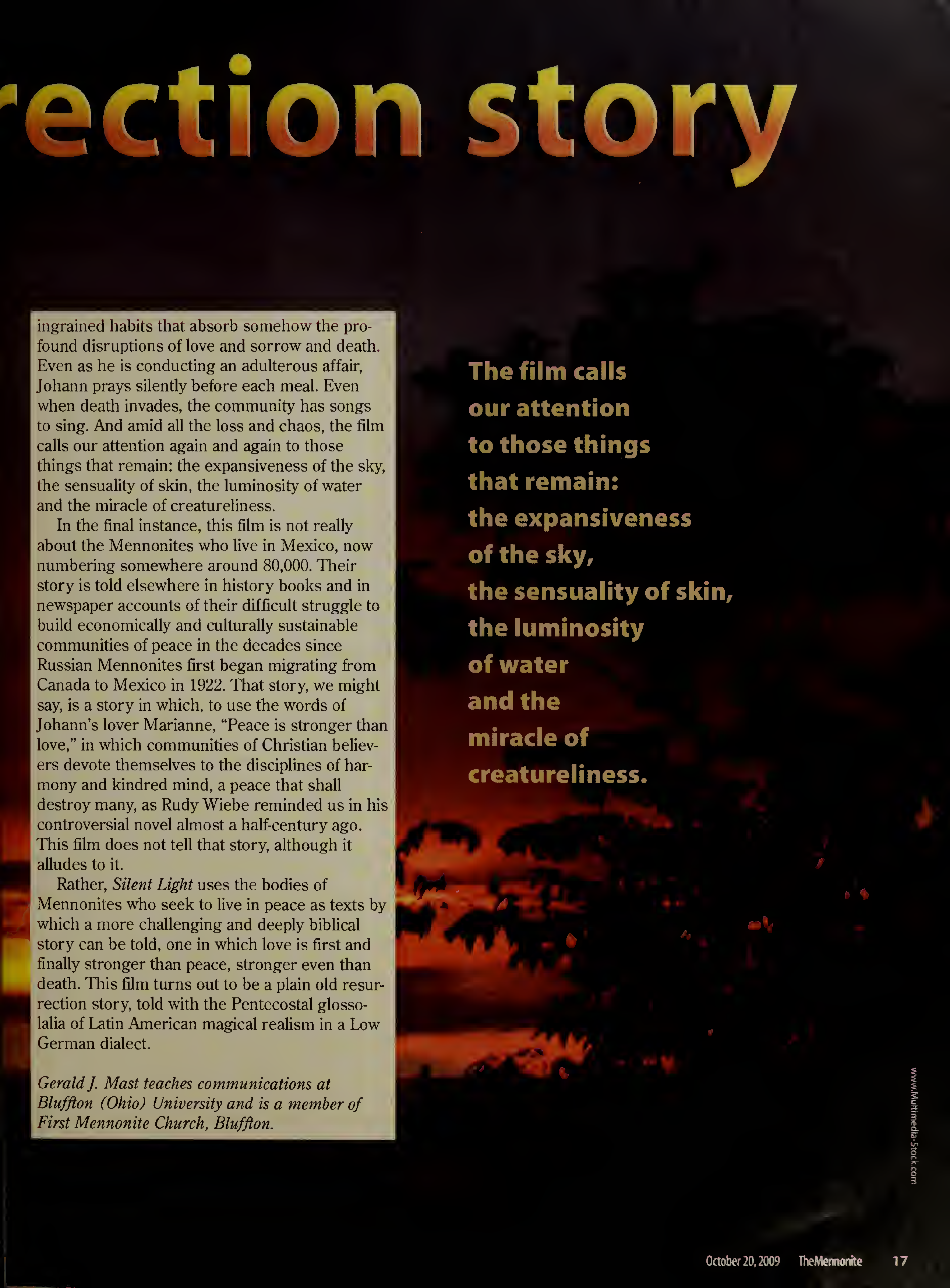
On the other hand, the film abandons popular dramatic conventions in order to allow the rhythms, habits and tensions of plain Mennonite culture to reveal, without any amplification, the complex emotional life of people who have inherited centuries-deep practices of restraint and reticence. Volumes are conveyed by a glance, a smile, tears, the slightest gesture. The bright silence between the few words spoken highlights the intensity and surplus of meaning found in the speech of people who are slow to speak.

Consumer culture: One reviewer—James Juhnke—has drawn comparisons with Peter Weir's 1985 film about the Amish in Lancaster, Pa.—*Witness*. As in *Witness* and a good many popular cultural products about plain people, including the documentary film about Amish rumspringa called *The Devil's Playground* and the TV reality show "Amish in the City," the film *Silent Light* depicts plain people who are attracted to the rhythms, tunes and conventions of consumer culture. However, this attraction is neither shown to be perverse nor designed to reassure audiences of the normalcy of consumer culture. Indeed, one available reading of the film is that the central character, Johann, has had his otherwise orderly life fatally ruined by the intrusion into his world of the Hollywood myth of true romantic love.

On the other hand, he does not experience this intrusion as an outside alien force he must resist. Rather, he comes to understand this disaster as a gift that exceeds the compulsive and destructive experience of adulterous attraction. The disaster that has come over him is perhaps sent not by the devil, as his father suggests at one point, but by the same God to whom he prays reverently every day. Such a discovery is not comforting and does not ward off death and heartbreak. Humans are nothing in the face of such an apocalypse, his father reminds Johann during a mournful scene toward the end of the film.

Time outside time: What is perhaps most striking about the film is the eternity—the time outside time—that the film reveals to be contained in the most ordinary of moments. This timelessness shows up in the repetition of deeply

ection story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ingrained habits that absorb somehow the profound disruptions of love and sorrow and death. Even as he is conducting an adulterous affair, Johann prays silently before each meal. Even when death invades, the community has songs to sing. And amid all the loss and chaos, the film calls our attention again and again to those things that remain: the expansiveness of the sky, the sensuality of skin, the luminosity of water and the miracle of creatureliness.

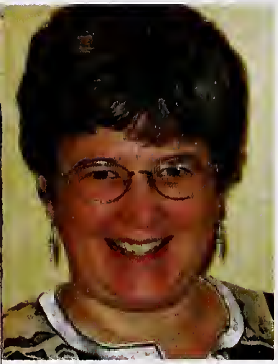
In the final instance, this film is not really about the Mennonites who live in Mexico, now numbering somewhere around 80,000. Their story is told elsewhere in history books and in newspaper accounts of their difficult struggle to build economically and culturally sustainable communities of peace in the decades since Russian Mennonites first began migrating from Canada to Mexico in 1922. That story, we might say, is a story in which, to use the words of Johann's lover Marianne, "Peace is stronger than love," in which communities of Christian believers devote themselves to the disciplines of harmony and kindred mind, a peace that shall destroy many, as Rudy Wiebe reminded us in his controversial novel almost a half-century ago. This film does not tell that story, although it alludes to it.

Rather, *Silent Light* uses the bodies of Mennonites who seek to live in peace as texts by which a more challenging and deeply biblical story can be told, one in which love is first and finally stronger than peace, stronger even than death. This film turns out to be a plain old resurrection story, told with the Pentecostal glossolalia of Latin American magical realism in a Low German dialect.

Gerald J. Mast teaches communications at Bluffton (Ohio) University and is a member of First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

> **The film calls our attention to those things that remain: the expansiveness of the sky, the sensuality of skin, the luminosity of water and the miracle of creatureliness.**

Listen and learn from each other



Susan Mark Landis is denominational minister for peace and justice. She thanks the community of believers who helped with this article.

Words are free in the United States. The first amendment to the Constitution guarantees "Congress shall make no law … abridging the freedom of speech." When John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) argued for free speech, he wanted us to seek information and ideas, receive information and ideas and impart information and ideas. The purpose of free speech, Mill believed, is to learn and to teach, to explore and together uncover the best wisdom—a necessity for a new country seeking fresh ways to live together.

These days, public talk is full of judgment, clichés and name calling—not about listening and learning from each other.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul points out that his adult thoughts and words are different from his childish ones. Children aren't yet sure of themselves and what they believe. They are quick to call each other names, especially when they can't win an argument. Sometimes among children, truth matters less than loyalties. The need to control the conversation and have the last word is overwhelming. ("Oh, yeah? Well, my dad is stronger than your dad.")

Paradox and mystery imply that we can't know everything but that we are able to learn to live with uncertainty.

Paul declares that when we put aside these childish ways, we begin to think as adults. We aren't so easily threatened by new information. In our secure adult selves, we can open ourselves to others and their views. As Richard Rohr says, adults are more able to enter into the mess that reality has always been, knowing that we need mature wisdom to deal with the paradox and mystery that is life.

Paradox and mystery imply that we can't know everything but that we are able to learn to live with uncertainty. Some call this "living into the questions."

Perhaps as you think about your own journey into adulthood, you're aware of your increasing capacity to live with complexity and ambiguity. Paul points out, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror" (v. 12). Even as wise adults led by God, we won't have all the answers.

Jesus taught in a way that lived into thought-provoking questions. "What is the kingdom of heaven like?" He put compassion for people ahead of unbendable laws and society's sense of morality. He went to Zacchaeus' house for a meal. Although the encounter resulted in Zacchaeus' conversion, others criticized Jesus. He allowed his famished disciples to gather grain on the Sabbath. He ignored certain interpretations of the law to bring healing, moving among the complexities of life, choosing for people rather than moral judgments.

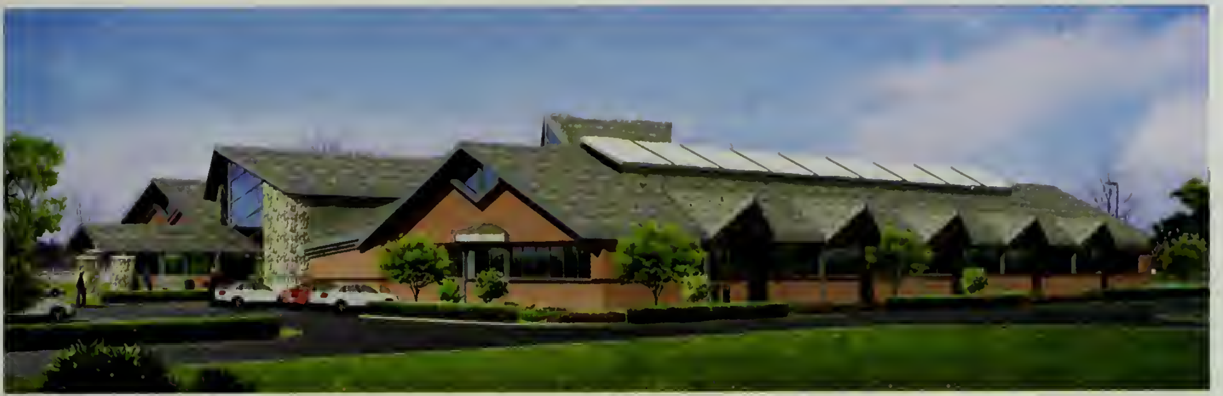
The United States is divided on a multitude of social concerns. Issues have strong advocates on each side. All a person need do is choose one side on one topic, and a group is ready to tell them how to think, speak and act on a host of issues. This group identity is a comfort in a complex world. However, this approach leaves little room for nuance or honest exchange of ideas. We've lost the precious purpose of free speech—to learn from each other through careful listening and evaluation of information.

When we notice that our churches, which are full of Christians sincerely trying to follow Jesus, are divided into groups defined by society, we must stop and take notice. When the early Anabaptists first began meeting in homes and caves, they studied Scripture together and heartily debated the meaning of God's Word for how they lived. Sermons were followed by response times to scrutinize content. The local gathered community of people seeking the heart of Jesus was the final authority.

It is possible to move beyond national polarization in our churches and again pore over Scripture to find ways to live together in the complex mystery of life. We find some guidelines in Paul's writings to churches. Romans 2 reminds us not to judge each other. Galatians 5 lists the fruit of the Spirit that binds together churches who risk conversation about controversial topics: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Galatians 3 reminds us to forgive each other, love each other and let the peace of Christ rule our hearts. Perhaps most importantly, Genesis reminds us that each human is created in God's image and deserving of our respectful listening ear. And that is good. TM

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Moved by the Spirit**—Cathleen Hockman-Wert
- **Women theologians gather**—Patricia Burdette



An artist's rendering of the new Mennonite Church USA office building in Elkhart, Ind., slated for constuction in 2010 and 2011

MC USA building project moves forward

Also provides $1.85 million for Executive Board, Mission Network programs

During the all-boards meeting in Kansas City, Mo., Sept. 24-26, the Mennonite Mission Network board and Mennonite Church USA Executive Board reaffirmed the "Joining Together, Investing in Hope" campaign led by the Mission Network on behalf of Mennonite Church USA.

The campaign will provide $6 million for a new office building adjacent to the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary campus in Elkhart, Ind., and provide $1.85 million in program ministry support to Mission Network, the Executive Board and Global Mission Fellowship.

According to Peter Graber, campaign director, $2.2 million is still needed before the groundbreaking for the new building, scheduled for June 2010. Completion of the project is expected by December 2011.

Graber reported that Mennonite Education Agency, which currently has its offices at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church east of Goshen, Ind., has joined the campaign and will move its offices to the building in Elkhart.

In 2007 and 2008, 300 donors gave $2.6 million in cash to the campaign, says Graber. From these contributions, the Mission Network annual fund received a net benefit of $400,000, Executive Leadership $200,000 and Global Mission Fellowship $100,000.—*Everett J. Thomas*

The Corinthian Plan will launch in 2010

Application deadline extended to Nov. 15; plan will provide $500,000 in aid

The Corinthian Plan will become a reality Jan. 1, 2010. The health-care access plan of Mennonite Church USA reached its revised goal, and project director Keith Harder expects that nearly 70 percent of the denomination's eligible, credentialed pastors will be on the new plan.

"I am especially grateful for the assistance that will be going to more than 50 congregations and their pastors who currently have no health-care coverage," Harder says. The 450-plus congregations expected to participate will generate more than $500,000 for the Fair Balance Fund that will provide assistance for these pastors. Some congregations will contribute to this fund even if they will not be full participants in the plan.

Harder reports "a flood of enrollments and inquiries" the last two weeks of September as congregations anticipated the Oct. 1 deadline.

To facilitate this interest, The Corinthian Plan Project Team has extended the enrollment deadline to Nov. 15. This will give congregations just now learning about The Corinthian Plan or beginning to consider its possibilities more time to make informed decisions. Applications for assistance also will be received until Nov. 15 or until the fund is exhausted.

While the original participation goal of 80 percent of all Mennonite Church USA congregations will not be met, The Corinthian Plan project team, including MMA staff and actuaries, agreed that there is sufficient participation to have a plan that will have a solid financial foundation.

"We believe that we have adequate participation to create a strong and viable plan," Dave Gautsche, MMA representative on the project team, says. "Plus it will meet the goal for access that the denomination set out to address."

Harder reports that more than 250 congregations have yet to decide about The Corinthian Plan; 190 congregations have indicated they are unlikely to participate. For more information about The Corinthian Plan, contact Keith Harder at 866-866-2872 (toll-free) or keithh@mennoniteusa.org.
—*June Krehbiel for Mennonite Church USA*

Focus on immigration leads to plans

Seventy people ask, 'Who is my neighbor?' at three-day gathering in Texas.

James Krabill

Members of House of Healing Mennonite Church perform a dramatic reading of Ephesians 2:13-22. From left are Alexis Gomez, Gilbert Valdez, Britney Trevino and Paul Olivo.

For three days, Mennonite pastors and lay leaders gathered to revisit the question originally posed to Jesus by a teacher of the law: "Who is my neighbor?"

From Sept. 18-20, 70 participants met at Lakeview Camp and Conference center in Waxahachie, Texas, for "And You Welcomed Me: A Consultation of the People of God on Immigration."

"[The Good Samaritan] parable teaches us how to deal with 'outsiders,'" said M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, the keynote speaker, "and it shows us that those who come from 'the outside' are the ones who teach us. When we talk about our neighbor, we are talking about millions of Christian brothers and sisters."

The gathering was cosponsored by Mennonite Mission Network (Peace and Justice Support Network and Urban Leaders Network), Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership and Western District Conference.

Encountering immigration in the Bible, Carroll, a professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary, provided three keynote addresses. Raised in a bicultural home, Carroll first thought about issues surrounding immigration when he returned to the United States after teaching for 15 years at a seminary in Guatemala City. Carroll realized that conversations he was having with Christians surrounding immigration weren't different from secular conversations. Since then, he has been working with churches and Christian groups to reframe the conversation surrounding immigration in a Christian framework.

"I believe the Bible responds to human reality right now," said Carroll. "It can orient the national, it orients the immigrant, and it can orient us all as we engage each other and the government."

Carroll also discussed biblical law and its relevance to conversations on immigration. Using examples from Exodus, Deuteronomy and Leviticus, Carroll illustrated ways that laws of the land reflect a culture's values and said God's law favors the sojourner.

"Biblical law is a lens through which we can see and interpret reality truly," said Carroll. "The culture doesn't have this lens, so it's the church's job to raise its voice of truth."

Members of several local congregations led communal worship and workshops designed to equip participants to carry on conversations at home. Latino pastors from the Dallas area shared some of their own experiences with ministry in the city. Many of the pastors minister to congregations with undocumented members, and all but one of the pastors are bivocational and work full-time in another job.

"Our key for welcoming people is to present Jesus Christ as he has not been introduced before. Our church has embraced Anabaptism," said Esther Vazquez, pastor of House of Healing Mennonite Church in Dallas and board member of *The Mennonite*. "Violence is a part of the city, and to hear a word of God in the way of nonviolence and truth is unique."

In other workshops, Mennonite Central Committee representatives shared information from their recent study on immigration among churches in the United States. Dorothy Nickel Friesen, Western District conference minister, led participants in a case study of Anglo congregations engaging conversations on immigration. Jodi Read of Mennonite Central Committee helped attendees create advocacy plans to use when they returned home. Marty Troyer, pastor of Houston Mennonite Church, invited conferencegoers to signify their commitment to working together to welcome neighbors. Troyer invited people to kneel and bow their heads, as a symbol of trust and loyalty.

A panel of people who work with immigration on a daily basis also challenged participants to get involved.

"I hope this experience is not just a time of enjoying seeing people but planning to put into practice what we heard," said Sandra Martinez-Montes, a member of Iglesia Menonita Mi Redentor (Mennonite Church of My Redeemer) in Richardson, Texas. "Immigration is not just an issue. It is about our own neighbors."—*Hannah Heinzekehr of Mennonite Mission Network*

Anabaptist Institute celebrates 21 years

Simplicity of Instituto Bíblico Anabautista program helps congregations most.

Ninety-five people celebrated Instituto Bíblico Anabautista's 21 years of ministry during the IBA students retreat, Sept. 4-7 at Shocco Springs Camp in Talladega, Ala.

Graduates, current students, tutors, area coordinators and the resource speakers affirmed their commitment to church education. Resource speakers included founder and first director Marco Güete, former director Gilberto Flores, current director Rafael Barahona and staff associate Tony Brun.

The weekend included study sessions, meditations, a mural exhibition, plays, testimonies, recreation, times for praise and an evening anniversary banquet where previous directors and volunteer tutors were recognized for their years of service.

Among those recognized were Damian Rodriguez, a pastor who has tutored for 13 years, and Violeta Ajquejay, who has worked for 20 years as assistant director.

The group also celebrated through songs and poems. Idalmy Dominguez, a tutor in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., read a poem she wrote for the the anniversary.

The testimonies during the weekend described the impact IBA has had on congregations and their leaders. One strength of the program is its simplicity and ease of implementation by a congregation. IBA has helped in gifts discernment and the discovery of new leaders who are now pastors, teachers, church planters and support staff in the church ministry of their respective communities. Also, IBA offers education at a fraction of what it would have cost to send students to residential programs. One reason for the savings is the volunteer work of tutors and coordinators, as well as the financial support it receives from Mennonite Church USA and individuals.

Alumni now serving in key church positions, such as Antonio Caceros, Jaime Cazares, Mario Dominguez, Juan Limones, Jorge Quintanilla, Alberto and Aurora Parchmont, and Noe Zuniga, shared testimonies.

Soon-to-be graduates gave thanks for the training they had received. Even those just beginning the program gave testimonies about the value, usefulness and blessing of IBA courses. Stories shared also illustrated how their IBA education nurtured them and impacted the direction of their lives.

One tutor shared how he had tutored his son as a young IBA student. Now he is studying at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., and his son is beginning at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg.

Violeta Ajquejay

Idalmy Dominguez reads her poem at the Instituto Bíblico Anabautista student retreat.

Everyone at the event worked together to write a proposal to the Hispanic Mennonite churches calling for each U.S. Hispanic congregation to support IBA and participate in the program.

The following are testimonies about IBA:

- "IBA has helped me grow. I have obtained the theological training to serve now as a pastor." —*Andres Mendoza, Miami, Fla.*
- "I started IBA as a curiosity while studying at a Christian college, and I suddenly realized the value of IBA. It's my resource for doctrinal life, exegesis and context."—*Jaime Cazares, Newton, Kan.*
- "IBA has helped me understand my gifts, the ministry and my place in the church. I was able to perceive God making me part of the spiritual development of others and that I am valued as a woman in the work of God."—*Imelda Sanchez, Omaha, Neb.*
- "I started IBA just as I started my Christian life, and it was challenging. IBA changed my life radically; now I serve in the leadership of our church."—*José Luis Arjona, Pasadena, Texas*
- "When I joined IBA, I had many questions, but my tutor was very helpful and understanding. Now I coordinate the women's ministry of our church."— *Elisabeth Martinez, Evangelical Garifuna, Lauderdale Lakes, Fla.*
- "IBA has prepared us; I 'live' at my church, and IBA is giving us life."—*Idalmy Dominguez, Mennonite Garifuna, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.*

—Meno Acontecer *with translation by Rafael Barahona*

Microloans in Thailand transform lives

Thai director of microloan program does not give up on woman who steals.

Photo provided

Lucille Zimmerman and Joy, the director of MED, worked closely together during Zimmerman's six years in Det Udom, Thailand.

When Lucille Zimmerman brought closure to six years of service with Eastern Mennonite Missions in Det Udom, Thailand, she was brimming with stories of lives she's seen transformed.

Zimmerman described one woman, Oy, who when she first begged a loan from the Life Enrichment Church's MED (microeconomic development) office, the MED director Joy thought she was a high-risk client.

But even though Oy was deeply in debt and embroiled in family problems, Joy decided to take a chance on her after Oy successfully completed the probationary savings period.

Oy lived in a small narrow town house and ran her own laundry business out of the dark unpainted front room where she lived with her two daughters. She had only one washing machine and was making exorbitant payments for it to another loan company.

We long to see Oy truly transformed in every part of her life.—Lucille Zimmerman

After she received an MED loan (with lower interest rates) to pay off the other company for the washing machine, Oy was required to attend weekly meetings where she met with other clients and the MED staff. Each week she would hear personal testimonies from the staff and listen to the Bible passages.

Oy had already been through two husbands. Zimmerman said Oy was not very respected in the community, but the MED staff accepted her and stopped by for visits and meals.

Zimmerman said she was surprised when she and the MED staff were invited to Oy's third wedding. However, the marriage did not last, and Oy soon kicked out her third husband—accusing him of unfaithfulness and irresponsibility. During this time, the MED staff supported Oy with prayer and encouragement.

Oy learned how to get herself out of debt and use money properly. She sought MED director Joy's counsel on her financial decisions and successfully paid off her washing machine as well as many other loans.

Oy prospered enough that she was also able to find a newly built apartment to rent for her laundry, and her business kept growing despite the fierce competition from her neighbors.

On moving day, MED staff offered to help her move, as she had no relatives who were willing. After the move, Oy dropped by the MED office to make her weekly payment.

As Joy was taking the payment, the phone rang. She turned her back to answer, and realized later that Oy took advantage of the situation to help herself to the funds in the open can that held other MED clients' payments for the day.

When Joy returned and counted the money, she realized immediately what had happened. Instead of confronting Oy, she chose a less direct route: Joy charged Oy for the use of the moving truck—a service she had before planned to donate—in the exact amount which had been stolen from the MED can.

In spite of the disappointment and broken trust, Joy continued to love and pray for Oy. The relationship between the two women remained intact, and Joy noticed changes in Oy's attitude. She listened more intently to the Bible passages and asked for prayer.

"Oy started to realize that we loved her unconditionally," Zimmerman said.

Soon after moving to the new apartment, she was able to buy another new washing machine and just recently made the last payment to MED. She is now debt free.

"We pray that someday she will also come to fully understand and accept that Jesus paid her debt of sin," Zimmerman said. "We long to see her truly transformed in every part of her life."—*Jewel Showalter of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

Hesston holds centennial homecoming

Music groups, centennial sculpture unveiling, speakers all part of celebration

Would it advance the cause of Christ to establish a school somewhere in the West in which Bible work is made a specialty?"

That was the query, crafted by Anna Smith King and posed to delegates of the Mennonite Church's Kansas-Nebraska district conference held in Cheraw, Colo., on Oct. 18, 1907.

The answer to that question was celebrated by more than 1,000 people at Hesston (Kan.) College's Centennial Homecoming Sept. 25-27.

Herm Weaver was one of the celebrants. Currently the conference minister for Mountain States Conference, Weaver told his story—the story of a young man who showed up at Hesston in the fall of 1977 because a high school advisor told him he should go to college.

Weaver found his way to the administration building, and there he discovered that he was three days early and that most prospective students register before they arrive. He hadn't.

"For the next few days Bill Mason patiently walked me through the process of entering college," Weaver said. By the time the other students arrived, he had completed an aptitude test, filled out a schedule of classes and found jobs both on and off campus.

Weaver and his daughters, Hope, a 2009 Hesston grad, and Chloe, a sophomore, shared their dreams for Hesston College during the opening chapel service. Also introduced at the service were the newest emeritus faculty members Jim Mininger, Jake Rittenhouse and Gerry Sieber.

The centennial sculpture by Paul Friesen, "Prairie Cloister," was unveiled. Friesen, Hesston alumnus and emeritus faculty member, was commissioned by the college to create a sculpture celebrating the centennial year. He chose to work with a red cedar log because red cedar trees were some of the first trees to be planted on the campus.

Lana (Yoder) Dale and Luanne (Yoder) Southern, sisters who graduated from Hesston in 1981, returned to share as keynote speakers at the Saturday evening alumni banquet.

"We're not here to see through each other; we're here to see each other through," Dale said, summarizing their college memories and how Hesston's emphasis on service to the church and the world has impacted their lives and careers.

Following the banquet, the centennial music gala took center stage, featuring alumni from across generations, current college music groups and individuals, and the Centennial Choir. On Sept. 27, Tim Shue and the alumni band gathered people in, bluegrass style; followed by artist-in-residence Tony Brown's moving rendition of "Prepare Ye the Way" from *Godspell.*

Larry Bartel

Cast members for *Quilters* perform during homecoming weekend. From left: Megan Leatherman, Kristen Horst, Lisa Swartzendruber Yoder, Holly Swartzendruber and Laura Unruh.

Peter Wiebe, former Hesston College interim president and Hesston Mennonite Church pastor, shared a message titled "Back to the Future: Century II."

He briefly recalled the contributions of Hesston's eight presidents, then took a phrase from Eugene Peterson's translation of Hebrews 12:1-2.

"At this place, many people are called out," Wiebe said. "That's why we need Hesston College. Since it's a two-year school, our students immediately become leaders. We need to get on with the original vision—help people prepare themselves for ministry."

Herm Weaver couldn't agree more. "Several years ago, while teaching at Eastern Mennonite University [Harrisonburg, Va.], I got a package in the mail," he said. "It was a giant framed certificate that had my name on it and noted that I had earned a Ph.D. I sat that day in my office, remembering and giving thanks for Ernie Martin, my high school counselor, and remembering my first days at Hesston College. [I gave] thanks for such a place as this that could receive and nurture such a person as I.

"Last week found me in Southern India working on a peacebuilding adventure with Buddhists from Sri Lanka, Hindus from across India, and Christians from Bangladesh. My dream is that Hesston College will continue to be a place where a simple person like me can be welcomed totally unprepared, and nurtured, and helped to find meaning and purpose."—*Carol Duerksen*

Philly student leads wherever she goes

Courtney Walker represented Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Paraguay.

Photo provided

Courtney Walker with Nina, a girl from an orphanage in Santa Cruz, Bolivia

As a 12-year-old, Courtney was pursuing her own faith even without the support of her mother but eventually winning her mother over through her example. —Anita Lyndaker-Studer

Courtney Walker, who grew up in Oxford Village (government housing in Northeast Philadelphia), began attending Oxford Circle Mennonite Church (OCMC) at age 5 with her siblings. The church provided a place where she did not have to worry about having the best clothes, sneakers and hair. "We could be who we wanted to be," she says.

Now Courtney blesses those around her through her leadership positions at OCMC, at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and by attending this summer's Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15 in Paraguay.

Anita Lyndaker-Studer, executive director of the Oxford Circle Christian Community Development Association, volunteered with the after-school programs when Courtney attended as a child.

"I saw her leadership even as a 12-year-old [who] was pursuing her own faith even without the support of her mother but eventually even winning her mother over through her example," Lyndaker-Studer says.

Initially, Courtney went to church with only her siblings, but now their mother Pauline Hicks is involved at OCMC and a volunteer with the youth programs.

As a young adult, Courtney attended a school in Philadelphia for her first year of college but wanted to try another school and felt attracted to moving to Virginia. She talked to OCMC pastor Leonard Dow about her dreams, and he encouraged her to check out EMU, which he and others at OCMC attended.

Courtney says her first semester felt strange. "Being an African-American student there was hard," she says. "I can remember being in class and being the only black person."

She says she also experienced several racist actions toward her on campus. But she says she didn't want to "quit the first semester and give up." Instead she told herself, "I have to be here so I can do this."

Courtney did more than just stick it out; she immersed herself in all kinds of leadership positions. She went on to serve as president of the gospel choir, praise dance team, overseer of the Black Student Union, a ministry assistant, community program assistant, chapel assistant and more. Back in Philly at OCMC she works with the Vacation Bible School and after-school programs. She is also starting a choir and praise dance team.

Dow says he knows Courtney's first semester challenged her; however, the following spring, when Dow went to EMU, "Lo and behold, everyone knows Courtney," he says with a laugh.

While her faith and life story—growing up in Northeast Philly—is not typical of students at EMU, it may actually more closely resemble historical Anabaptist faith, Dow says.

Courtney connected with many other global Anabaptists this summer by traveling to MWC in Paraguay, as well as other countries, as part of her cross-cultural seminar with EMU.

"For her to be representing our church is very significant in Oxford Village," he says. "To see someone who represents the city as an asset to the church is a dramatic shift. People are seeing Courtney as a future leader. … I think there are so many 'Courtney Walkers' the church has yet to see."

Courtney says the Global Youth Summit in Paraguay touched her the most, as she "saw God's love globally." The youth cared deeply for each other's countries instead of an "I'm-from-Pennsylvania so-I-care-about-PA" attitude, she says.

However, witnessing the poverty in Paraguay struck Courtney, making her feel helpless.

"That was the saddest part," she says. "I could give them money, but what about when I left?"

After she wrote about it often, her professor and campus pastor Brian Martin Burkholder, told her, "Don't think God's love isn't there," she says.

Courtney has completed two years at EMU, and although she is taking this semester off for financial reasons, she plans to enter her senior year in January. Upon graduation, she will be the first from her family to graduate with a bachelor's degree. She studies biology and English and hopes to get her Masters of Public Health to enter hospital administration. "Life has been a complete struggle—hurdle after hurdle," she says, "but I make it."—*Anna Groff*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

Board chair defends decision on Bartel

Melvin Goering apologizes for lack of communication to the public.

The chair of the Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., board of directors on Sept. 25 defended the termination of the president as necessary for the institution's health. Melvin Goering of Santa Fe, N.M., spoke to about 175 people at the annual meeting of the Bethel College Corporation in the Schultz Student Center.

Goering said the removal of President Barry Bartel on Aug. 15 was "absolutely the only decision the board could have made and still keep its responsibility as a board."

He said the decision to end Bartel's presidency three years into a five-year contract came after a review showed the Bethel community lacked confidence in Bartel's leadership.

"When a community speaks and says this is no longer a leader we want to follow, it leaves the board no choice," Goering said. "You no longer can have a successful institution with that leadership."

The review, conducted this summer, surveyed all faculty and staff, student leaders, alumni council and board members. The findings gave Bartel high marks in some areas, Goering said, but also confirmed "a significant number of troubling signs."

The board shared the results of the review with Bartel on July 27. Goering said Bartel disputed the accuracy of the findings and denied the integrity of the process. This led the board to conclude a presidential change was necessary.

Goering said the board had hoped Bartel would agree and offer to resign. When he did not, the board decided to terminate him.

Goering apologized "that we did not communicate as well as we should have" to the public. He said the board grieved the decision, knowing it was hurtful to Bartel and shocking to college supporters. He said he was describing the process in more detail now to dispel rumors.

He said he was encouraged that responses to the board's decision showed great depth of support for Bethel.

Goering and interim president John Sheriff both spoke of financial and enrollment challenges. Enrollment is down by more than 100 students over a two-year period, to 435 this fall.

This year's budget deficit could be as high as $900,000, even after $750,000 of cuts were made last year.

Goering and Sheriff both said there is much optimism and positive feeling on campus this fall. Goering said there was new vitality and energy. Sheriff said the campus community was rising to meet challenges with confidence.

Barry Bartel

Goering gave an opportunity for response, but there were no questions or comments.

Brenda Glanzer Lilliston, moderator of Western District Conference of Mennonite Church USA, read a statement of support for Bethel from the conference's executive committee.

In a phone interview Sept. 26, Bartel said that when the board presented the review's results to him, he recognized the validity of some concerns and stated his commitment to work to improve.

"I said I was interested in strengthening my presidency in response to the criticism and had already begun to do so in specific ways," he said.

When a community speaks and says this is no longer a leader we want to follow, it leaves the board no choice.—Melvin Goering

Bartel and Brenda, his wife, are living at Council Grove, Kan. Their children, Jordan and Leah, are students at Bethel.

"I'm taking time to reflect and consider options for the future," he said.—*Paul Schrag of* Mennonite Weekly Review

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WORKERS

Miller, I. Keith, was ordained as co-pastor at Mt. Pleasant Mennonite Church, Chesapeake, Va., on Sept. 20.

Scaggs, Sammy R., was ordained as co-pastor at Mt. Pleasant Mennonite Church, Chesapeake, Va., on Sept. 20.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Antle, Breanna Rae, Aug. 19, to Brandon and Desiree Loganbill Antle, Hutchinson, Kan.

Bartley, Cordin James and Chloe Bri (twins), Aug. 14, to Joshua Bartley and Jessica Trump, Goshen, Ind.

Byerly, Dylan Lee, Sept. 22, to C.J. and Allison Mayer Byerly, Sarasota, Fla.

Cordy, Zoey Alexis, Sept. 14, to Brett and Chelsea Wyse Cordy, Delphos, Ohio.

Davies, Ellis James, Sept. 14, to Ben and Karah Davies, Denver, Colo.

Doss, Lillian Tyler, Sept. 8, to Tyler and Ashley Starn Doss, Canton, Ohio.

Eichelberger, Samuel Davis, Aug. 28, to Brad and April Garton Eichelberger, Wayland, Iowa.

Graber, Deedra Ruth, Aug. 13, to Troy and Cassie Featherstun Graber, Wayland, Iowa.

Koller, Kinslie Grace, Aug. 29, to Alan and Kristen Carlson Koller, Topeka, Kan.

Leaman, Sophia Marie, Sept. 10, to Jared and Addie Miller Leaman, Goshen, Ind.

Miller, Brody Michael, Aug. 27, to Angie Miller, Goshen, Ind.

Slaubaugh, Owen David, Sept. 9, to Shawn and Cara Schweitzer Slaubaugh, Parnell, Iowa.

Vardaman, Jaiden Nicole, Sept. 10, to Jeff and Janet Burford Vardaman, Elkhart, Ind.

Weaver, Silas McGlone, Aug. 7, to Adam Weaver and Molly McGlone, Madison, Wis.

Yoder, Devin James, Sept. 5, to Andrew and Eve Zalar Yoder, Allensville, Pa.

MARRIAGES

Foord/Voth: Stephen Foord, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Sherry Voth, Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Manitoba, at Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Aug. 22.

Fort/Ineichen: Megan Fort, Wayland, Iowa, and Michael Ineichen, Riverside, Iowa, Sept. 26, at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland.

Frazier/Kuykendall Bryant: Doug Frazier, Timberville, Va., and Teresa Kuykendall Bryant, Timberville, July 19, in Luray, Va.

Lawson/Stucky: Richard Lawson, Mt. Carmel, Tenn., and Alison Stucky, Newton, Kan., Aug. 1, at West Zion Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kan.

Lodiong/Yoder: Clemente Lodiong, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Celeste Yoder, Cincinnati, Sept. 5, at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville, Pa.

Norris/Volkman: Tyler Norris, Delta, Ohio, and Elissa Volkman, Wauseon, Ohio, Oct. 3, at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Regehr/Whitney: Mackenzie Regehr, Inman, Kan., and Cornel Whitney, Jr., Atlanta, Ga., Sept. 19, in Lithonia, Ga.

DEATHS

Bontrager, Caroline Jennifer, Kalona, Iowa, was stillborn on Aug. 27. Parents: Derek and Nici Beachy Bontrager. Funeral: Aug. 29 in Kalona.

Buller, Peter W., 84, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 28 of injuries sustained in a fall. Spouse: Gladys E. Klassen Buller. Parents: Peter and Anna Buller. Children: James, Charles, Jeanette Slater; five grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 31 at Silverwood Mennonite Church.

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DISCOVERY & FELLOWSHIP

Droz, David Thomas, 59, Kalona, Iowa, died Oct. 1. Spouse: Joette Yoder Droz. Parents: Jack and Madonna Trudo Droz. Child: Kimberly Leaton. Funeral: Oct. 4 at Wellman Mennonite Church, Wellman, Iowa.

Friesen, Nettie Martens, 92, Altona, Manitoba, died Sept. 10. Spouse: Ernest Friesen (deceased). Parents: Peter and Katherine Derksen Martens (deceased). Children: Dorothy Brown, Norman, Elvira Hiebert, Kenneth, and Irma Driedger; 20 grandchildren; 40 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 14 at Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church.

Kolb, Homer, 78, Phoenixville, Pa., died July 12 of complications from cardiac surgery. Spouse: Clara Moyer Kolb. Parents: Jacob Funk and Climena Ehst Kolb. Children: Christine Balmer, Joan Kucharik, Marcus; eight grandchildren. Funeral: July 18 at Vincent Mennonite Church, Spring City, Pa.

Nofziger, Denver J., 72, Archbold, Ohio, died Sept. 20 of injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Spouse: Evelyn Stalter Nofziger. Parents: Clifford and Irene Short Nofziger. Children: Kathy Rupp, Gary, Neil, Rex, Keith; 11 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 23 at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Owen, Eva Mae Martin, 93, Valparaiso, Ind., died Sept. 18. Spouse: Ray D. Owen (deceased). Parents: William and Amelia Birky Martin. Children: Beverly Gibson, Larry, Terry, Diane Costas; 16 grandchildren; 68 great-grandchildren; 10 great-great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Sept. 20 at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Kouts, Ind.

Schlabach, Sara Ann Kauffman, 73, Goshen, Ind., died Sept. 11. Spouse: Theron Frederick Schlabach. Parents: John and Mina Edelman Kauffman. Children: Gerald, J. Carlyle, Roderic, Kristina Johnson; eight grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Sept. 15 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Schmucker, Leonard E., 86, Louisville, Ohio, died Sept. 8 of cancer. Spouse: Lucille F. Sommers Schmucker. Parents: Elmer and Ada Maurer Schmucker. Children: Lillian Badrak, Marvin, Myrna Reiser, Carol Fite, Darrel, Ron; nine grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 11 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

Swartz, Edna E. Breneman, 96, West Liberty, Ohio, died Sept. 1. Spouse: Vernon Swartz (deceased). Parents: Christian and Rose Berry Breneman. Children: Stevan, Dianne Liles, Marjorie Paulson; nine grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 5 at Pike Mennonite Church, Elida, Ohio.

Umble, Leroy D., 88, Atglen, Pa., died Sept. 24. Spouse: Fern 0. Umble. Parents: John G. and Ada S. Umble. Children: Gerald, Mary Ann Hess, Evanna Hess, Ivan, Marlin, Doris McCreary, William; 17 grandchildren, one great-grandchild. Funeral: Sept. 29 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen. Pa.

Witmer, Anson, 88, Elkhart County, Ind., died Oct. 2. Spouse: Fern Weaver Witmer (deceased). Parents: Walter and Alma Witmer. Children: Donald, Devon, Marvin, Carl, Betty Weldy; 19 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 6 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themennonite.org.

"Becky Drumm has been a listener, an encourager, and has helped me keep my focus. Our contract has ended but she still takes my calls and she usually responds within 24 hours."

Julie Stratton, Director of Resource Development and Church Relations

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TESOL and English composition: Ph.D. in rhetoric/composition, linguistics or English (ABD will be considered), with advanced degree in TESOL. Background or experience in public school teaching desirable. Direct TESOL program (minor and education endorsement). Teach TESOL, language and composition courses.

Review of applications begins Dec. 1 for these searches and continues until an appointment is made. Compensation is commensurate with education and experience within the university pay scale. Send letter of interest, curriculum vita or resumé, three letters of reference (submitted directly from referee or if necessary from placement office) and official transcripts to Elaine Suderman, Academic Affairs, **Bluffton University**, 1 University Drive, Bluffton, OH 45817-2104. See www.bluffton.edu for additional details. Bluffton University welcomes applications from all academically qualified people who respect the Anabaptist/Mennonite peace church tradition and endorse Christian higher education in a liberal arts environment. All Bluffton students are required to engage in cross-cultural studies, and the university is pursuing initiatives to diversify both the faculty and student body. Members of underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply. EOE.

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The obese elephant in the room

Gordon Houser

Perhaps you've heard a story like this: A man travels to another country and eats at a restaurant. He says to his guide: "This is good. What is it?"

The guide replies, "You don't want to know."

Robert Kenner's film *Food, Inc.* (PG) pulls away the curtain, as it were, on where our food comes from. Maybe you don't want to know. But what you don't know is hurting you and many others.

The film exposes America's industrialized food system and its effect on our environment, health, economy and workers' rights. It introduces us to Barbara Kowalcyk, whose 2-year-old son, Kevin, died from E.coli poisoning after eating a hamburger. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 76 million Americans are sickened, 325,000 are hospitalized and 5,000 die each year from food-borne illnesses.

We also meet a poor family of four that eats fast food regularly, even though it's unhealthy. The father has diabetes and takes medication. Meanwhile, they cannot afford to buy fruits and vegetables, a much healthier diet, because these are not subsidized like the sugar, fat and salt that make up much of our diet through fast food.

The film points out that early onset diabetes is skyrocketing in this country, especially among racial-ethnic groups. One-third of African-American teenagers will get diabetes.

Obesity is a major factor in health-care costs. "About 60 percent of Americans are overweight or obese, writes Sharon Begley in *Newsweek* (Sept. 21), "and their health-care costs are higher: $3,400 in annual spending for a normal-weight adult versus $4,870 for an obese adult, mostly due to their higher levels of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and other conditions."

In a Sept. 9 op-ed piece in the *New York Times*, Michael Pollan, a consultant for *Food, Inc.*, writes that "we're spending $147 billion to treat obesity, $116 billion to treat diabetes, and hundreds of billions more to treat cardiovascular disease and the many types of cancer that have been linked to the so-called Western diet."

"The American way of eating has become the elephant in the room in the debate over health care," Pollan writes. But few are talking about food system reform, and the government keeps subsidizing an industry that pollutes our environment and mistreats its workers and the animals it kills to provide our meat.

"The government is poised to go on encouraging America's fast-food diet with its farm policies even as it takes on added responsibilities for covering the medical costs of that diet," writes Pollan. "To put it more bluntly, the government is putting itself in the uncomfortable position of subsidizing both the costs of treating Type 2 diabetes and the consumption of high-fructose corn syrup."

Depressing as this sounds, change is happening, as the film points out. The organic food industry is growing, and many are purchasing locally grown produce and products and turning to farmer's markets and Community Supported Agriculture programs.

The film ends with some suggestions on how to change our food system. Here are 10:

1. Stop drinking sodas and other sweetened beverages.
2. Eat at home instead of eating out.
3. Support the passage of laws requiring chain restaurants to post calorie information on menus.
4. Tell schools to stop selling sodas, junk food and sports drinks.
5. Go without meat one day a week.
6. Buy organic or sustainable food with little or no pesticides.
7. Protect family farms; visit your local farmer's market (and ask it to accept food stamps).
8. Make a point to know where your food comes from—read labels.
9. Tell Congress food safety is important to you.
10. Demand job protections for farm workers and food processors, ensuring fair wages and other protections.

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

FILMS

Capitalism: A Love Story (R), Michael Moore's latest film, makes three major points: Capitalism is evil, it must be replaced with democracy, and everyone's greed contributed to the economic downturn. The documentary is full of heart-wrenching interviews with families who lost their homes and livelihood. He tries to interview rich men on Wall Street but only speaks to security guards—humorous, then frustrating. The editing fails, in contrast to his previous films. Footage of Franklin D. Roosevelt reading his second bill of rights had the most impact on me.—*Anna Groff*

Bright Star (PG) dramatizes the three-year romance between 19th-century poet John Keats and Fanny Brawne, cut short by Keats' untimely death at age 25. Beautifully filmed and acted, it's a paean to poetry.—*gh*

BOOKS

Practices: Mennonite Worship and Witness by John D. Roth (Herald Press, 2009, $12.99) completes a trilogy (following **Beliefs** and **Stories**). Roth writes: "Cultivating practices that honor the essential unity of worship and witness is at the heart of Christian discipleship and the wellspring of spiritual renewal." These three books make a good addition to church libraries.

Mennonite in a Little Black Dress: A Memoir of Going Home by Rhoda Janzen (Henry Holt & Company, 2009, $22) is an honest and hilarious memoir of Janzen's return to her "Mennonite" home after her atheist husband left her for a man he met on Gay.com. The quotes are because Janzen mostly defines Mennonite in cultural ways, not as a faith. I imagine she speaks for many who have left a stifling environment but can't leave it entirely.

Continued from page 5

then crafting well-written poison darts. Thanks for soliciting for your readers' feedback. In my mind it's the only way to lead a major publication with integrity.—*Eldon Mast, Longmont, Colo.*

The Mennonite is standing on the sidelines

I note the existence of your moratorium on letters and articles concerning homosexuality ("The Dangers of Dialogue," Sept. 15). For the life of me I cannot understand the wisdom of running away from an issue. How are we to be peacemakers in the world when we don't even know how to be peacemakers within our own denomination?

I suggest that *The Mennonite* run a series of profiles of people in our denomination who are working to bridge the gap between the two sides of the homosexuality issue. I submit there are such people. *The Mennonite* could play a positive role by profiling these people and describing what they are doing that is working to promote understanding and positive dialogue. This would be much preferable to standing passively on the sidelines as *The Mennonite* has chosen to do since 2000.—*Jerry Weaver, Bluffton, Ohio*

Establish guidelines for discussion

I loved the Sept. 15 editorial, "The Dangers of Dialogue." Yes, let's lift the moratorium on letters and articles addressing sexuality. I totally agree we need a good set of guidelines to avoid any "spewing of toxins" that are not helpful and only add to our homophobia. I long for the kind of conversation that I listen to on NPR on their program of "This I Believe." I've been moved to tears many times by these stories that both inspire and enlighten and, yes, the Holy Spirit is very much involved. One definition of dialogue that I remember from Ruel Howe's *The Miracle of Dialogue*: There is no dialogue until there is a "meeting of meaning." Keep up the good work.—*Samuel J. Troyer, Goshen, Ind.*

Limit letters to those with connections

The Sept. 15 editorial, "The Dangers of Dialogue" is quite good in its open tone. With the issue of the moratorium being visited again, I thought of adding a modest proposal: Homosexuality affects quite a small segment of the population—maybe 4-6 percent are gay. Yet so much energy has been devoted to the subject, I imagine largely by those who are not gay or who do not know anyone who is gay.

One idea would be to limit letters to *The Mennonite* to those who have a family member or close friend who is gay. Maybe even expanding it to a church member/attendee who is gay. Limiting the discussion to those who are relevantly connected to the issue likely would eliminate most of the ones who otherwise would want to add their opinion. In other words, if one has not been touched by the issue in a real and personal way, why write letters about it? If folks were writing letters on the condition of animals in zoos but never visited a zoo and didn't even have a house pet, then why be so opinionated?

I am reading what I just wrote and thinking, "That is sort of weird." So if nothing else, it might be a humorous "solution." It must be really challenging dealing with the topic, and I support your handling of it.—*Tim Schultz, North Lima, Ohio*

Editor's note: In our Nov. 3 issue we will publish more of the letters we received in response to the Sept 15 editorial. Because of the great volume, we will not publish letters that respond to these letters.

The Mennonite's appearance is important

I am glad to see the change to a monthly magazine format ("Board Approves *The Mennonite* Redesign," Oct. 6). I am also impressed with your Web site. One suggestion I have as you make this change: I am always impressed with the design, feel, layout of Mennonite Mission Network's *Beyond Ourselves* magazine. Is there any way that you could incorporate some of those things into *The Mennonite*? The most recent *Beyond Ourselves* is a great example. Great cover picture, color and readable layout on the inside.

The Mennonite is important to our denomination, and its appearance is sometimes as important as its content. Blessings as you continue to deliver a great magazine for our denomination.—*Glen Rhodes, Arthur, Ill.*

Disappointed about changes

I was disappointed to read that *The Mennonite* will stop publishing marriage and birth announcements when it moves to a monthly, 64-page format. I enjoy perusing those announcements to see if anyone I've met has had recent life changes. It's a small way to stay connected to Mennonites all over the country and, even as an avid Internet user, I'm not sure I'd check the Web site regularly. I hope *The Mennonite* editorial board will reconsider cutting those announcements.—*Allison Boehm Lehman, Denver, Colo.*

Editor's note: The annual readers' survey consistently shows that the births and marriages section is one of the least-read portions of the magazine. We've decided to make this change so we can add some new features and expand obituary information.

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

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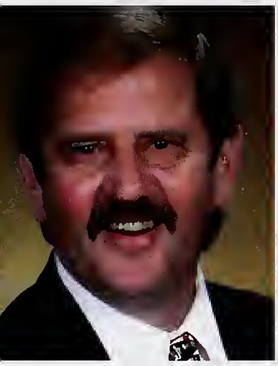


Everett J. Thomas

The forgotten women

Jesus calls us to remember and care for the most vulnerable in our society and world. No people are more vulnerable and in need of help than the 140,000 women and girls who have fled Darfur's six-year conflict. But, according to a Sept. 29 Reuters report, women who fled the violence "are regularly raped in refugee camps in neighboring Chad, despite the presence of U.N.-trained forces."

Once again we must pay attention to this part of the world and ask our elected representatives to think of matters other than the national health-care debate and its consequences.

On Oct. 2, representatives from faith communities across the United States—including Mennonite Central Committee—met with the Obama administration and asked that working for a lasting peace in Sudan become a higher priority. Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church pastor Cindy Lapp was MCC's representative.

The group delivered a letter signed by 1,400 clergy—including 100 Mennonite pastors. The letter asked the administration to "work with multilateral coalitions to ensure that displaced people can return safely to their homes and begin to rebuild their lives," said an Oct. 1 release from MCC. The letter also asked for the U.S. government to work toward full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2007 and for a resolution in the lesser-known conflict in Eastern Sudan.

Why should we care about violence between two Islamic groups? Because these enemies continually try to demoralize each other with the most heinous action—raping the women belonging to the other side.

The complexities around this conflict make it difficult for U.S. foreign policy. First, this region has become the front line for the struggle to dominate northern Africa. Arab Muslims from the north, called Ginjaweed, are attempting to eradicate non-Arab Muslims. It is widely believed that the Sudanese government supports the forces from the north. Last March, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for the Sudanese president—making Omar al-Bashir the first head of state to be indicted while in office.

A second complexity for U.S foreign policy is the role of the United Nations and the African Union peacekeeping mission in Sudan's western region of Darfur. Since beginning operations there in January 2008, 14 peacekeepers have been killed—the latest one on Sept. 29. But at least one organization claims the peacekeeping force is not doing its job.

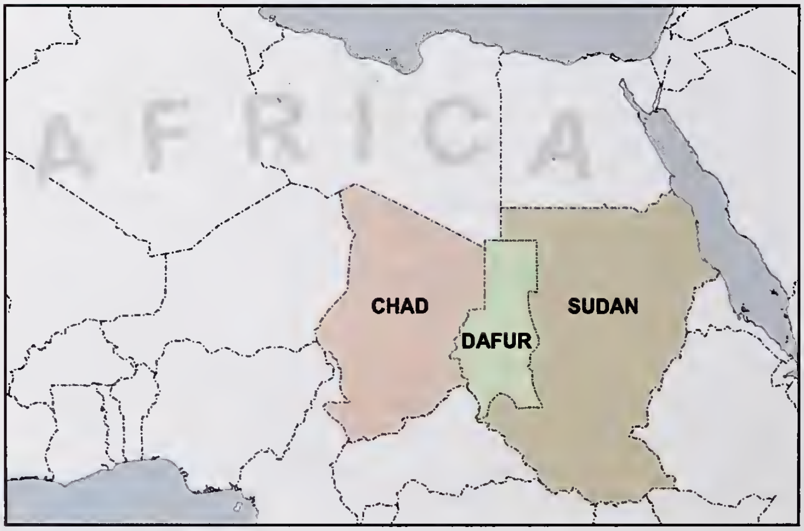
"These women fled Darfur, hoping that the international community and Chadian authorities would offer them some measure of safety and protection," said Amnesty International's Tawanda Hondora in the Reuters report. "That protection has proved to be elusive, and they remain under attack."

Few of our friends and neighbors will care about violence between Islamic groups. Few will also want to spend more tax money to expand the U.N. peacekeeping effort that sees its people killed in the distant conflict.

In the meantime, real women and girls are suffering. The conflict is being waged on their bodies—deliberately shaming them into silence. But now is the time for us to pay attention and to ask our elected representatives to pay attention.

We can also follow the reporting by Mennonite Central Committee, offer financial support to MCC and pray for the "least of these" who are largely forgotten by the world.—*ejt*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org



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The spirit of Jesus empowers us

Ron Byler is acting executive director of Mennonite Church USA. Contact him at RonB@mennoniteusa.org.

Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.—Matthew 5:48, *The Message*

In a recent commentary on the national health-care debate in the United States, a prominent national columnist wondered whether America's historical commitment to suffering for the common good so that our children will have a better future is at risk.

This commitment to the common good, to caring for our brothers and sisters in community, is one I have observed time and time again in Mennonite congregations I have been a part of. When there is a person in need among us, we are quick to respond. We understand that we are all part of the body of Christ.

Despite shifting cultural norms, our caring for others is not at risk among congregations in Mennonite Church USA.

For example, six Hmong Mennonite congregations in the United States and Canada have formed an association to care for each other, encourage each other to share the gospel of Jesus and start new churches. For the Hmong congregation in St. Paul, Minn., biweekly Bible studies in homes have given members ample opportunities to be more involved in each other's lives while preparing them to reach out to their Hmong neighbors.

For Blooming Glen (Pa.) Mennonite Church, a traditional congregation with more than 700 members, being part of a broader community meant reaching out to their brothers and sisters in Goshen and Elkhart, Ind., when the unemployment rate there reached almost 20 percent. Blooming Glen's pastor, Firman Gingerich, wondered what mutual aid could look like in the broader community of Mennonites. His challenge led to a "Because We Care" pancake breakfast that raised more than $8,000 for families in need in Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference.

In our denomination, the recent decision to move ahead with The Corinthian Plan to offer health insurance for pastors and church workers will give our congregations, conferences and agencies an opportunity to show our commitment to each other as a church.

Our joining together for health insurance will help us provide coverage for those pastors who do not currently qualify for insurance and whose congregations cannot afford to provide it. More than 50 congregations and their pastors who currently have no health-care coverage will receive assistance from the plan.

These examples of sharing are evidence that we understand the Apostle Paul's words to us in 2 Corinthians 8:14 that "it is a question of a fair balance between your abundance and their need."

These words link us with our sisters and brothers in many parts of the world. As we face growing economic hardship, will we continue to respond graciously and generously out of our relative abundance toward others in our global family?

The Shared Convictions of Global Anabaptists, beliefs we share with other Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in Mennonite World Conference, speak of mutual accountability in our worldwide community of faith and life. "The spirit of Jesus empowers us to trust God in all areas of life … and share our possessions with those in need."

An invitation: What are your congregation's experiences of being the body of Christ—in your congregation and around the world? Send your stories to me this month, and I'll share them in Equipping on the Mennonite Church USA Web site.

TheMennonite

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Cover: During Assembly 14 of Mennonite World Conference, African-Americans initiated talks with Africans about how their ancestors had treated each other in the years of slavery throughout the Americas. The talks resulted in a reconciliation foot-washing ceremony during Africa Day [Aug. 16, 2003]. Here Deusilene Martins Milhomen (left), Brazil, washes the feet of Precious Dladla, Zimbabwe. Photo by Everett Thomas. Illustration by Dee Birkey.

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Helped start one of the first MYFs

I read with interest your Oct. 6 article "Learning from the Past," since I was a part of that past. About three months after that Mennonite conference meeting in August 1947, four young people—Delbert Erb, Mary Kay Nofsinger, Ada Schrock and Edgar Metzler—showed up unannounced at my workshop door as I was welding a part on my corn picker. Peering out from under my welding helmet, I was informed that these folk were from the Mennonite Mission Board in Elkhart, Ind., planning to meet with a group of young people from Metamora (Ill.) Mennonite Church that evening. It was then around 3 p.m., and I, by some quirk of fate, was the guy who was to get them together. The goal was to have an initial meeting of something called Mennonite Youth Fellowship (MYF) that evening.

We had the meeting after I called Henry R. Schertz, pastor of Metamora Mennonite. He confessed he had forgotten to tell me that the church council had suggested my name as a person to lead this initial gathering of MYF. So Betty, my wife, and I did some intensive work on the phone and managed to collect about a dozen young folk in our front room to launch what I believe was one of the first meetings of MYF.

We had an exciting first few years that even included a church planting. But that is another story.—*Vernon Schertz, Atlanta*

Saddened by Southeast Conference action

I was sad to learn that Southeast Mennonite Conference revoked Randy Spaulding's credentials ("Southeast Conference Revokes Credentials," Oct. 20). There are many things that distress me about this, but I'll just name three.

1. This has happened far too often: A pastor offers spiritual gifts to the church and they are affirmed, welcomed and used in great and mighty ways. Then the pastor "comes out," and because of his/her sexual orientation those gifts are totally invalidated.

2. The idea that only a few individuals in conference leadership, not the local congregation, can discern the will of God is unAnabaptist. How can the conference deny the discernment of the local body of believers who "wholeheartedly" support their pastor and want him to continue his ministry with them?

3. It appears that the Southeast Mennonite Conference is going against the statement that was passed by the delegates at Convention 2009, asking us "to create a healthy, safe environment in which to have dialogue, one that builds up the body of Christ and is respectful and honest about our differences." The SMC leaders officially met with Randy on July 28. At their second meeting on Sept. 15, he was told his credentials were revoked. How could any "dialogue" happen with Randy and his congregation in just a few weeks? Again, decisions made in my beloved Mennonite church have disappointed me.

I pray we will all experience God's wisdom and love as we learn the meaning of "agreeing to disagree in love."—*Joyce Hostetler, Columbus, Ohio*

Will MC USA see a drop in membership?

This is a response to the Sept. 15 editorial request to hear from readers regarding the moratorium on the church's teaching on sexuality ("The Dangers of Dialogue"). You are truly between a rock and a hard place, as Mennonite Church USA is pushing dialogue yet your experience has been that an attempt at dialogue significantly decreased your circulation. A few observations:

Mennos are probably not very good at open dialogue. Most of us still see it as an attempt by others to influence our thinking or get us to change our minds. Most of us in the trenches do not see the homosexuality issue as being on par with other traditional issues (dress or modern conveniences) that seemed to pass with time, and therefore one could simply wait until the old generation died off to solve the conflicts. We see it as a basic biblical principle.

If *The Mennonite* experienced a 25 percent drop in readership, partially due to letters regarding sexuality, will a similar phenomena occur if Mennonite Church USA softens its official statement on sexuality? There is a good chance that may occur. We are not a people that care to dialogue with the vocal minority but instead vote with our affiliation, whether to a magazine or a denomination. Can Mennonite Church USA survive such a reduction

IN THIS ISSUE

We focus on the gifts of Anabaptist women in many ways in this issue. Cathleen Hockman-Wert (page 8) celebrates the completion of the five-year partnership between North American and African women called Sister-Link. Patricia Burdette (page 11) reports on the gathering of women theologians in Asunción, Paraguay, in July. The cover represents one of the most poignant moments at the 2003 Assembly Gathered in Zimbabwe (see "Cover" on page 3). Freelancer Heidi Martin (page 20) reports on a "Sister-Care" event held Oct. 2-3 in Harrisburg, Pa. These articles provide great context to announce the first woman president at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. Sara Wenger Shenk was appointed on Oct. 25 (page 19).—*Editor* of membership? This is not a threat but a real possibility, as it seems to be one of the major issues that determines conference and congregational affiliation with Mennonite Church USA.

As a longtime reader of *The Mennonite*, I prefer not to be bombarded with letters on sexuality on a weekly basis. May you experience God's blessing in your decisions.—*Dan Miller, Walnut Creek, Ohio*

'Dialogue' is a convenient cop out for leadership

"Let's dialogue" is often code language and a convenient out for leadership that views most issues of contention as merely "procedural" in addressing resolution. The problem is that faith and church requires "conviction" to make it work in the longer term. And therein lies the issue. Some matters of conviction are such that people simply need to disagree and move on—into separate churches and organizations—in peace and respect for each other. In other words, agree to disagree and move on. In some cases this finally mercifully stops the annoying and badgering of each other.

This is not intended as a statement of perspective other than suggesting it is OK to disagree to the point of parting ways organizationally. I live in a community where any number of good and faithful Christians worship in churches not closely affiliated with my Mennonite Church USA congregation.—*Paul Miller, Berlin, Ohio*

We need a field trip

I read the Sept. 15 editorial regarding dialogue, and it spurred my thinking about a quote by Rumi that captures the true meaning of the word: "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there."

I love this quote. Our beliefs are just ideas, not the essence of who we are. Resonating from the 13th century, Rumi's words nudge us, as members of the whole Earth community, to embrace our differences.—*Diana Hershberger, Goshen, Ind.*

Missed the invitation

Thanks for "Dangers of Dialogue" (Sept. 15). I regret that I did not respond to the June 2 column "The Meanings of Dialogue" written by Jim Schrag and cited in the editorial. I prejudged his intentions and missed the invitation.

How we use word choices results in monumental differences, as James in the Bible also attests. In the case of Jim Schrag, I apparently worded my choice as, A, Jim trying to avoid harmful confrontation by placating people on the right and left, and, B, Jim urging hopeful new rules for engagement. Because I have felt that my thoughts during the troublesome merger talks had been dismissed without due consideration, I now prejudged Jim's words and wrongly chose A and "acted out" my indifference. Alas. I apologize to Jim and the church.—*Walt Friesen, Hesston, Kan.*

Editor's note: In the Nov. 17 issue we will conclude Readers Say responses to our Sept. 15 request for counsel. Please see the editorial on page 31.

Remembering Maynard Shelly

Thank you for the information regarding contributions Maynard Shelly made to the Mennonite church and society (News Digest, Sept. 1). My respect and appreciation for him were formed in the back room of a plumbing business in Hattiesburg, Miss. We met there for evaluation of our day—after walking on a picket line in front of the county courthouse and going door-to-door helping and encouraging people to register and vote. Following our daily time of evaluation, we attended church services where we were inspired and encouraged by local pastors and fellow voter-registration workers. Looking back, one can see that things are much better. However, as I remember Maynard's compassion for "justice for all" that he expressed in those meetings, Maynard would recognize there is much yet to accomplish.—*Lyn Hershey, Payette, Idaho*

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

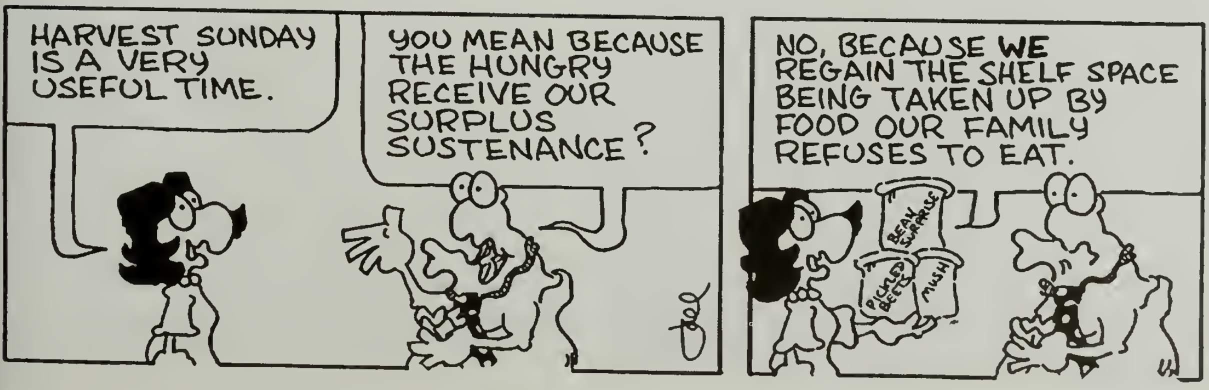
Do women do theology differently from men? (60 votes)

- ○ Yes (75%)
- ○ No (12%)
- ○ Not sure (13%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


HARVEST SUNDAY IS A VERY USEFUL TIME.
YOU MEAN BECAUSE THE HUNGRY RECEIVE OUR SURPLUS SUSTENANCE?
NO, BECAUSE WE REGAIN THE SHELF SPACE BEING TAKEN UP BY FOOD OUR FAMILY REFUSES TO EAT.
BEAN SURPRISE
PICKLED BEETS
MUSH
Joel

IN BRIEF

Bluffton awards for Neff, Schirch

Retired businessman Herman Neff '49, is the recipient of Bluffton (Ohio) University's 2009 Lifetime Service Award. Neff served as the president of General Foods Canada's Hostess Division and the vice president of General Foods. After 26 years, Neff retired in order to work with Mennonite Central Committee in Canada as the director of Self-Help Crafts. LaVerne Schirch, '58, a retired professor of biochemistry, received the Professional Achievement Award. He taught at Bluffton for 15 years. In 1969, he cowrote a grant that helped Bluffton acquire the first computer on campus.

After 54 years, $1 million

In 1955, struggling farmers Ed and Mary Swartzendruber began giving money to Goshen (Ind.) College because they believed in tithing 10 percent of their income. Their goal over the years since then has been to reach the $1 million mark in total giving to the college. They accomplished it this year.—Goshen College *Bulletin*

Martyrs Mirror should be in Mennonite schools

ELKHART, Ind.—"Can we use the *Martyrs Mirror* stories to instruct and challenge members of the Anabaptist community and other Christians as well?" said Penny Naugle at an Oct. 16 symposium sponsored by Mennonite Education Agency at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart. "Radical living and radical teaching depend on radical texts. … In today's Mennonite schools, the voices of the martyrs should still be given opportunity to speak."

Naugle, one of six academics whose papers were selected for presentation, is elementary principal at Penn View Christian School in Souderton, Pa. Allan Dueck, principal at Bethany Christian School in Goshen, Ind., opened the symposium with an explanation of its purpose.

"What does the growing acculturation of Mennonites require of Mennonite schools?" Dueck said. "We need a new study on the rationale for Mennonite schools and distinctive nature of Mennonite pedagogy."

John D. Roth, professor at Goshen (Ind.) College, has agreed to write a book in response to the Oct. 16 symposium and the first one held in Lancaster, Pa., May 8. Other presenters on Oct. 16 included Ernie Martin, Harrisonburg, Va., Linda Taylor, Muncie, Ind., Robert Reyes, Rebecca Hernandez and Janeen Bertsche Johnson, all from Goshen, Ind.—*Everett J. Thomas*

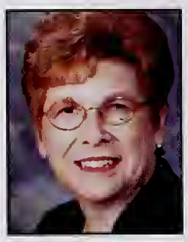
photo provided

Philippines' Mennonites respond to devastation

Children of members of the Lumban Mennonite Church in the Philippines pose with aid prepared by their church to distribute in the community. Eastern Mennonite Missions' representatives arrived in the Philippines Oct. 9 with additional assistance after typhoons Ketsana (Ondoy) and Parma devastated the country and killed more than 600 people.—*EMM*

Nickel Friesen to retire by July 2010

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—The executive board of Western District Conference has accepted the resignation of its conference minister, Dorothy Nickel Friesen. Friesen, who joined the conference in 2002, will retire from full-time ministry no later than July 31, 2010, immediately following the next WDC annual meetings in Waxahachie, Texas.


Dorothy Nickel Friesen

"With Dorothy's incredible gifts of visioning and administration, Western District Conference has expanded its ministry to meet changing and challenging times," says Brenda Glanzer Lilliston, WDC moderator. During her tenure, Dorothy led a visioning and strategic planning process that led to a new mission statement, priorities and structure," says Lilliston.

Some of the challenges Friesen says she faced as WDC conference minister were "the realities of leading an organization that is over 110 years old; the economic trends in our country and in WDC; the competing loyalties for church members' time, talent and treasure; the lack of spiritual vitality; and the complexities of holding together when we are steeped in individualism."

The WDC executive board is establishing a search process to fill Friesen's position and hopes to announce search committee members by Nov. 1.—*Western District Conference*

Mennonite World Conference begins search

GOSHEN, Ind.—In a letter sent to Mennonite Church USA moderator Ed Diller on Oct. 6, Bert Lobe, search committee facilitator for Mennonite World Conference, announced that MWC has initiated a search process to replace current general secretary Larry Miller. Miller will conclude 22 years of service with MWC by May 2012.

"This letter is an invitation for you to submit nominations and to identify and encourage individuals whom you think suitable to consider this position," Lobe wrote.

The committee will receive nominations from January-June 2010, meet with candidates on a short list from July-December 2010, conduct face-to-face interviews with two or three candidates January-March 2011. After making a recommendation to the MWC executive committee in April 2011, the MWC General Council will have an email vote to confirm the appointment. Announcement of the appointment is projected for May 2011. MWC president Danisa Ndlovu will serve as chair of the search committee.—*Everett J. Thomas*

photo provided

U's Menno Cross event draws 99 racers
m left, Canadian Mennonite University alumnus Craig nner and Olli Hyytiainen cycle in CMU's Manitoba Cyclocross ent called Menno Cross on the CMU campus in Winnipeg on t. 26. Hyytiainen came in first in the A race for competitive lists.—*CMU*

Blogger to cook through *Simply in Season*

WATERLOO, Ont. and SCOTTDALE, Pa.—First there was Julie and Julia, the book and then hit-movie, about one woman's quest to make all the recipes in Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Now there is "Simply Me: A Year of Eating Locally, Mindfully and Simply," a new blog by Wendy Hammond of Grand Rapids, Mich., about her goal of making every recipe in *Simply in Season* (Herald Press, 2005).

"It started out with me wanting to make good use of fresh vegetables I was getting from the community-shared agriculture organization I belong to," says Hammond, who works in church relations for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee. "When I saw *Simply in Season*, I thought that would be a perfect way to do it." *—MPN*

Anabaptist Communicators meet in Akron

AKRON, Pa.—Fifty-six communicators from the United States and Canada attended the 26th annual Anabaptist Communicators conference Oct. 9-10 at Mennonite Central Committee offices in Akron. This year's theme, "Escape from Planet Blah!," had as its keynote speaker Michael Buckingham of Holy Cow Creative. In addition, several workshops focused on various aspects of communication, ranging across the Internet, print, video and radio-television. Two people joined the Anabaptist Communicators board during the conference. Jon Trotter of Virginia Mennonite Missions is the organization's new vice president. He replaces Kirsten Klassen of Mennonite Mutual Aid. Also joining the board as an at-large member is Jennifer Steiner of Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes. She replaces Hannah Heinzekehr of Mennonite Mission Network. Stuart Showalter remains chairperson of the organization, and Fred Steiner is the executive director.*—Anabaptist Communicators*

Young Adult Fellowship meets in Alberta

CALGARY, Alberta—The annual meeting of the binational Young Adult Fellowship, held Oct. 23-25 at Menno Simons Christian School, put a new spin on a familiar theme. "When they shall ask," from Deuteronomy 6:20-25, is often used to depict passing faith from seniors to children. The YAF used the passage to encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to share their stories with each other toward the building up of the church.

Featured storytellers Adrian Jacobs of Brantford, Ont., and Vinh Le of Calgary told of the ways God works in their lives. Jacobs, a pastor, spoke of how he came to accept Jesus in a Native culture with many reasons to be suspicious of Christianity. Le grew up as a pastor's son in Vietnam. He told of the struggles Christians face and of his and his wife's experiences ministering to oppressed Vietnamese workers in Malaysia.

The fellowship was formed in response to the question asked at several large church gatherings: Where are the young adults? The Young Adult Fellowship's purpose is to connect Mennonite young adults for fellowship, faith building and strengthening interchurch connections. Organizer David Maurer, West Liberty, Ohio, said, "We need intentionality about how we pass on our identity. We are getting so much of who we are from the culture around us."*—Donita Wiebe-Neufeld of* Canadian Mennonite

Mennonite radio spots win top Catholic award

HARRISONBURG,Va.—The Catholic Academy for Communications Arts Professionals has announced that the Mennonite radio spots "Unsung: Family Voices on Mental Illness" have been awarded a 2009 Gabriel Award. The radio spots from Third Way Media (then Mennonite Media) speak to the stigma of mental illness in society and the difficulty of family members and friends also dealing with the illness of their loved one.*—Mennonite Mission Network*

—compiled by Anna Groff

IN BRIEF

Two EMU alumni receive awards

Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., presented Anthony Pratkanis, 52, and J. Robert Eshleman, 74, with top awards. Pratkanis has been a professor of psychology at the University of California at Santa Cruz since 1987. He coauthored a best-selling book, *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion* (Holt Paperbacks, revised edition, 2001). Eshleman left EMU in 1956 after three years of study when he was accepted early into dental school at the Medical College of Virginia. Today he is in his 50th year of teaching at MCV.*—EMU*

Goshen College presents awards

Goshen (Ind.) College presented its 2009 Culture for Service Awards to Galen D. Miller '74 of Goshen and John Martin '74 of Columbus, Ohio. Miller is owner of Miller Poultry in North Orland, Ind. He was cited for his generosity, especially to food banks during the height of the economic crisis last winter, and ethical business practices. Martin has been a tireless advocate for people with disabilities and helped resolve a dispute with the Ohio government. Martin is director of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.
—Goshen College

Moved by the Spirit

The Mennonite World Conference assembly in July marked the completion of a unique five-year partnership between North American and African women church leaders. Through the partnership, nine women from Congo, Kenya and Tanzania have received theological training.

by Cathleen Hockman-Wert

We of Mennonite Women USA recognize that power dynamics are inevitably at play in telling a story like this; the story would be different if told by our sisters from the African Anabaptist Women Theologians (AAWT) group. Still, we want to share our experience as an encouragement to the church and a testimony to the movement of the Spirit within our institutions. We share it with appreciation for all who participated and with thankfulness to God.

For us, for me, the story began in January 2005 with a set of committee meeting minutes.

Three AAWT scholarship recipients (from left) are Tatiana Ndjoko (Congo), Rebecca Osiro (Kenya), Leya Muloba (Congo).

A five-year partnership between African and North American women concludes.

Four years earlier some African Anabaptist women church leaders formed a group with the help of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) staff. At the 2003 MWC assembly in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, seven women from five countries were chosen to serve as a leadership committee, and this group met again in Nairobi, Kenya, in November 2004.

Mennonite World Conference distributed 14 pages of minutes from this meeting to Mennonite agencies. I was then editor for Mennonite Women USA (MW USA), and I remember reading those minutes with a sense of awe. I had never before heard my sisters from this part of the world so fully articulate their sense of God's calling. Something about those minutes made these women, on a distant continent I've never visited, real to me.

I had never before heard my sisters from this part of the world so fully articulate their sense of God's calling.

In their words, this was their vision for their group: "to identify talents and help nurture women's gifts in the ministry for the glory of God and for sustainability by coordinating women's training and creating awareness in the church so that women are effectively utilized in the church on an equal basis with their male counterparts."

Their first stated objective: "The women anticipate that by the year 2009, at least 20 women will have trained fully and/or partially in theology across Africa Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Church."

Twenty African women trained in theology. An inventory in the minutes tallied 227 women (nearly all of whom were in Zimbabwe) with any amount of theological training in the five nations, so a gain of 20 would be significant.

In conversations with MW USA executive director Rhoda Keener and members of our board of directors, we kept returning to this specific goal. We realized how ambitious it was, yet it was something we could get our heads around. We could see that a partnership between MW USA and AAWT could help make our sisters' dream a reality. And this dream struck a chord in us.

Such a partnership was not like anything MW USA had attempted before, and it felt like a big leap of faith. We knew it would require a significant commitment of staff time and financial resources. Yet we came to see it as an opportunity to take our own ministry to a deeper level. We hoped, too, that forming a connection to African theologians might help our organization strengthen its ties with U.S. women church leaders.

As we debated getting involved, we told the biblical story of Esther—the woman who found herself in a place of privilege, of resources, "for such a time as this." What was our organization for if not for this kind of partnership with our sisters? We noted that another phrase from the story seemed applicable—that if we refused to answer the call we were hearing, the African women would find assistance elsewhere someday. But we said, Why not us? Why not try?

The fact was, it appeared no other agency at the time was better suited or more likely to make a commitment to these women. MWC staff member Tim Lind said, "While there has always been a lot of interest in AAWT throughout the global church, we had difficulty finding a group that was willing to serve as a formal link. As a result we were grateful and relieved when Mennonite Women USA accepted the challenge. We think the experience can contribute much to our common search for authentic ways of being a global faith community."

Through an MW USA program called Sister-Link, assisted by Mennonite World Conference, a three-pronged partnership developed.

First, Mennonite Women USA committed to providing scholarship funds for women selected by the AAWT committee. I was no longer working for MW USA but teamed up with another former staff member, Susan Jantzen, to lead this fund-raising effort as volunteers. The project raised approximately $35,000 over the five years. While part came from MW USA's budget and special offerings, a large portion was provided by a group called Les Amies (friends): about 40 North American women pastors and theologians who agreed to support the scholarships financially throughout the duration of the partnership.

In the second part of the partnership, the AAWT leaders were paired up with women theologians in North America as pen pals, with the intention of developing friendships and providing mutu-

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al support as women leaders in the church.

"To pray for Christians around the world is a good thing, but I found myself praying in a much more meaningful way for my Sister-Link partner Mama Swana in Kinshasa, Congo, whose photo was in my living room," says pen pal coordinator Sylvia E. Shirk, pastor of Manhattan (N.Y.) Mennonite Fellowship.

Such a partnership was not like anything Mennonite Women USA had attempted before, and it felt like a big leap of faith.

"We had the blessing of having met at Mennonite World Conference in 2003, and as her pen pal and prayer partner, it was rewarding to read her letters and overwhelming to receive her gifts," says Shirk. "She used email and was a faithful correspondent. Mama Swana's prolific writing has been an inspiration and a challenge to me. Our exercise of partnership between women theologians of two continents in this Sister-Link was life-giving. Catching a glimpse of the world through each other's eyes created a space for liberating interdependence that offers ongoing benefits for all those who participated."

Third, the partnership included a commitment from Mennonite Women USA to walk beside AAWT organizationally as they develop and implement their vision for ministry.

Rhoda Keener reflects: "This part of the Sister-Link became my unique responsibility. Although AAWT secretary Rebecca Osiro and I talked about ways MW USA has organized, I believe being present as a sister organization was far more important than any governance structures or forms we shared. I'm delighted to know that the AAWT now has a constitution, a brochure and has successfully transferred leadership for the next six-year period."

Mennonite Women USA's International Women's Fund has provided scholarships for 56 women in the last 10 years.

In the past five years we have rejoiced in seeing women complete their theological training and mourned when one scholarship recipient, Lucy Apiyo of Kenya, suddenly passed away after a brief illness. We exchanged emails, letters, gifts and visits; AAWT leaders came to North America, and Rhoda Keener participated in a 2007 AAWT meeting in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Steve Keener

Mary Schertz (left) and Rebecca Osiro

We prayed for our sisters facing violence in Kenya and Congo. We were thrilled to see an article by AAWT leader Sidonie Swana published in Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary's journal *Vision*. And we praised God when our sister Rebecca Osiro, the AAWT secretary who received AAWT scholarship funds, became the first woman to be ordained for pastoral ministry in the Kenya Mennonite Church.

All our shared dreams were not realized. Cross-continental communication was challenging, and some of the pen-pal relationships were more meaningful than others. Fewer scholarships were awarded than hoped. At times AAWT leaders were unable to choose among possible recipients because of the great difficulties they face in communicating among themselves across five countries and two languages.

Work still lies ahead for the AAWT group as they continue to work through the hard questions of how visions can be shared and decisions made in the future. Yet while the pace was not always rapid, progress was made.

Now that the initial partnership has concluded, scholarships will continue to be available to AAWT-selected women through MW USA's International Women's Fund. This fund has provided scholarships for 56 women in the last 10 years.

"This is a story of women being moved by the Spirit and others being moved to respond also—of being stirred by something far away, something we haven't seen yet but know in our bones could happen," Susan Jantzen says. "Coming together across these distances and cultural gaps is complex. But a shared vision of what can be was greater than the obstacles."

Cathleen Hockman-Wert is a member of Corvallis (Ore.) Mennonite Fellowship.

A life-changing event

Women theologians gather in Paraguay.

by Patricia Burdette

Martha Basualdo exclaimed, "This is a great spiritual festival," as she opened the first day of the women theologians' gathering in July in Asunción, Paraguay. The purpose of the gathering was to celebrate, collaborate and glorify God, as the group began a conversation with one another and with women all over the world, according to Basualdo. Some women noted that until now the church has left women behind but is now realizing that without women the church cannot expand. When one woman noted that the church is just beginning to address women's ordination seriously worldwide, there was resounding applause.

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Each day brought new understanding of theology and a sense of solidarity among the women.

Sylvia E. Shirk

Nina Lanctot of the United States and Sibusisiwe Ndlovu of Zimbabwe meet for the first time at Paraguay in July after five years in Sister-Link.

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It was a great honor for me to be invited to attend the first Congress of Latin American Women Theologians (LAWT) July 13-14, representing Mennonite Women USA (MW USA) in conjunction with the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly in Asunción. Each day brought new understanding of theology and a sense of solidarity among the women there representing three continents in what has become a worldwide movement of women theologians. Many of the women in leadership from Latin American and African nations were ones who had received or are receiving scholarship funds from MW USA's International Women's Fund (see article on page 8). MW USA, Mennonite Women regional gatherings and individual women in the church also assisted with travel funds for their sisters to attend this Congress. The women expressed gratitude for this.

The women likened their situation to that of the Syrophoenician woman (Matthew 15:21-28), whose encounter with Jesus sent a liberating message to all women.

The Congress emerged from the Latina women's contact with the African Anabaptist Women Theologians (AAWT), who were encouraged to organize by Tim Lind of MWC. From that relationship, which began at the MWC assembly in Zimbabwe, the Latin American women saw the need to organize into a group of women theologians themselves. AAWT later developed into a Sister-Link project with MW USA. AAWT and LAWT encouraged women theologians of color in the United States, who planned a gathering with the help of a grant from MW USA and others.

While the diversity, music and sheer size of the MWC assembly were impressive, the women theologians' gathering was a life-changing event for me.

The first intercontinental Congress of the Latin American Women Theologians took place July 14, with more than 100 Latin American women theologians representing nearly every Latin American nation and Latina women from the United States coming together to reflect on their work and their theology. Several of the women theologians were indigenous women from Guatemala and Panama. The Congress was the first of its kind in Latin America, and LAWT hosted this event.

Photo provided

Sandra Campos of Costa Rica emphasizes a point as her group discusses a Bible passage.

Also on July 14, the 13 AAWT representatives from five African nations joined the festival along with a dozen or so women theologians from North America who were interested in the event—some Latina, some Anglo.

Nellie Mlotsha of Zimbabwe said: "Unity in diversity endorsed who we are in Christ. I was blessed by the warm love the Latin American women showered on us, the African women theologians. Our prayer and wish to be fully involved in the work of the kingdom was theirs, we discovered. I am of the feeling that it is the motivation and confirmation of the Holy Spirit. It seems we are in agreement that we are here to complement the work men are doing rather than compete with them. All I have said is no doubt a testimony of our togetherness. Praise the Lord."

For me to hear the women discuss openly the marginalization of women in the church everywhere was a refreshing theological reflection. One woman said that women today, as in Jesus' time, are living "under the table." The women likened their situation to that of the Syrophoenician woman (Matthew 15:21-28), whose encounter with Jesus sent a liberating message to all women. Like this woman, they said, we are living under the table today. Yet Jesus leaves the center to come to the margins, where woman actually are. Though the Syrophoenician woman has no name, as is true for most women in the Bible, she approaches Jesus, breaking the boundaries of that time between men and women, Jew and Gentile, speaks to him, then leads him to her home, showing her courage and recognition of Jesus' authority. And due to the action of the Syrophoenician woman, Jesus gained a new understanding of masculinity, as both men and women shared this transformational experience.

Speakers encouraged the women to follow this example of challenging dogma in our own time. One said, "It is not a holy doctrine if some are excluded." Another noted how powerful it is when women share their stories. For me, this was the first time I had heard such strong and accurate words concerning the marginalization of women in the church—wherever it is located. It was also the first time I had heard an interpretation of the Syrophoenician woman's story as a learning experience for Jesus.

A highlight of the first day of the Congress was the evening celebration of the various Latin American cultures present. In the midst of this celebration, Milka Rindzinski of Uraguay, Olga Piedrasanta of Guatemala, and Linda Shelly of the United States were honored for the many years of work they have devoted to the church and the women in Latin America.

Ester Bornes of Argentina, said: "This gathering of fellowship and reflection with women theologians from Latin America and Africa, where dialogue was promoted along with theological reflection from women's perspectives, ... brought enjoyment and happiness, [and] was a great blessing to me. It challenges me to continue sharing with other sisters and brothers, visualizing ourselves in each space, taking away the fear of words, making more profound our Anabaptist theology and opening our hearts." (Translation by Linda Shelly)

Linda Shelly, Mennonite Mission Network's Latin American director, said she was "delighted to see women sharing their God-given gifts in leading Bible studies, preaching, singing, supporting each other and praying fervently. Most of the women present are involved in the mission work of their churches, and the connections they made with each other will be valuable for future ministries.

The Congress developed a concluding declaration that stated, in part: "As Anabaptist women and men we constitute an interdependent community, committed to the challenges in which we propose opening spaces for dialogue between men and women, leading to the formation of communities of faith that foster equality." The full declaration was presented at the MWC assembly by three LAWT representatives. The complete document enumerates our commitments to continued dialogue with the larger church and support of one another in our efforts to continue our theological work. (Translation by Linda Shelly)

The Congress concluded on the last day of the MWC assembly (July 19) with a Sister-Link tea hosted by the Paraguayan women theologians to celebrate all we had achieved together. About 100 women attended this tea, which was a time of great joy for all.

Patricia Burdette is editor of Timbrel, *the Mennonite Women USA magazine.*

This gathering of fellowship and reflection with women theologians from Latin America and Africa ... challenges me to continue sharing with other sisters and brothers, visualizing ourselves in each space, taking away the fear of words, making more profound our Anabaptist theology and opening our hearts.

—Ester Bornes of Argentina

Photo provided

Elizabeth Soto of the United States presents a Bible study to the first intercontinental Congress of the Latin American Women Theologians.

Does Jesus

by David W. Shenk and James Krabill

The story is told of a university student who, running to catch a two-hour final exam in chemistry, encountered the campus chaplain in the hallway. Breezing by without missing a beat, the student blurted out, "Will you pray for me at 4 p.m.?"

"Of course," replied the chaplain, calling after her. "But why do you want me to wait until then?"

"My exam begins at 3 p.m.," she shouted back, "and I'd like an hour to see if I can do it on my own."

Does Jesus, or the God he proclaimed, have any relevance to our modern situation, or to the pending exam of the college coed described here? In a society that venerates self-reliant heroes, rugged pioneers, crusty cowboys and hard-boiled entrepreneurs, it should not surprise us that our capacity for commitment to God is seriously diminished and underdeveloped. What people want and feel they need in a context shaped predominately by self-centered individualism is a personalized, custom-built religious experience—a natural outgrowth of the mix 'em, match 'em cafeteria-style consumer culture in which we live.

There is virtually no area of pop culture that remains untouched by the Jesus factor, from the music scene and the sports world to tattoo art and the fashion industry with its popular line of T-shirts.

Charles Strohmer, a lecturer on contemporary religious trends and author of *The Gospel and the New Spirituality*, calls this "The New Spirituality" —a swirl of practices and beliefs inspired by elements of Eastern religions, New Age-ism, self-help and pop psychologies, the occult and "a dash of Western optimism" reinforced by "whatever current scientific theories can be assumed." No two people put these elements together in exactly the same way, he says, since each is striving to design a spiritual "product" that suits their individual needs.

The result is that we now encounter not just one or even several but many stories about "truth"—as many stories, in fact, as there are people to develop them—and all are considered of equal veracity, weight and value.

What a trend we have in Jesus: Into this mix comes the Jesus story, elements of which appear in today's culture to be more popular and trendy than ever. Dozens of films have featured Jesus in recent years, and Jesus also makes frequent television appearances. There is virtually no area of pop culture that remains untouched by the Jesus factor, from the music scene and the sports world to tattoo art and the fashion industry with its popular line of T-shirts.

But where and when Jesus lived, and what he said and did, are virtually absent from most of these popular depictions. If one takes the time to dig a bit deeper and explore what 21st-century North Americans actually know or think about Jesus, one will encounter quite a spectrum of responses, including some of the following:

Legend: A recent survey in Britain and some parallel research being conducted among youth in the United States reveals that a high percentage of those interviewed believe Jesus to be a fictitious figure who never actually existed.

Lost: He did actually exist as a living person, but there is, unfortunately, no way to peel off the multiple encrusted layers of what others have said and thought about him.

Ludicrous: It is possible, perhaps even likely, that Jesus was a wonderful first-century teacher, but much of his ministry and message is unintelligible in our modern scientific age.

Likeable: There are parts of Jesus' message that are indeed appealing—his emphasis, for example, on peace, kindness, dignity, justice and freedom. It's the "Son of God," "forgiveness of sins," "I am

still matter?

Dreamstime.com

A look at the relevance of Jesus for today

the way" and "final judgment" stuff that creates distance between us and people of other religious traditions.

Lunatic: The question isn't whether Jesus was sincere. But was he misguided or at times excessively full of himself?

Maybe it's time to take another look at Jesus: Every one of the questions raised above deserves attention. To do so, we need to take another look at Jesus, to return to the biblical text—our primary written source for encountering Jesus—to listen once again to the captivating narrative that unfolds within its pages and to remind ourselves anew of the remarkable relevance of Jesus to our 21st-century circumstances.

Such an exercise does not necessarily answer all the questions we may have. Yet, as we explore the biblical story and learn more about the passionate convictions of the first New Testament faith communities, we find ourselves intrigued and strangely drawn to this Jesus for whom they abandoned all—and for whose cause they were willing to die. In the process, we discover that this carpenter from Nazareth is as disturbingly relevant for us in our North American world today as he was for Palestinian peasants and villagers living two millennia ago.

The picture of Jesus presented to us by these early witnesses is not an exact photograph in high-definition detail. Neither is it an indistinct abstract painting. It is more like a portrait, reliable and trustworthy in its representation, with more than enough detail for us to ask serious questions and find life-giving answers about who this Jesus was and is and how, hailing from a dumpy, backwater town in northern Palestine, he has become the most famous, transformative person in all of human history.

In many ways, it comes down to something as simple as this: If Jesus is nonexistent, unworthy, inaccessible or unreliable in any way, then nothing much about him ultimately matters. If, on the other hand, Jesus is what he said, said what he meant and meant what he said, then he could well be—in our lives and in the world—the only reality that ultimately matters. Nothing is more counterintuitive to most people in our world today, yet these issues remain central to the journey we are on.

Lesslie Newbigin, a lifelong missionary and former bishop in the Church of South India, takes this to another level when he writes: "If, in fact, it is true that Almighty God, creator and sustainer of all that exists in heaven or on earth, has—at a known time and place in human history—so humbled himself as to become part of our sinful humanity and to suffer and die a shameful death to take away our sin and to rise from the dead as the first fruit of a new creation; if this is a fact, then to affirm it is not arrogance. To remain quiet about it is treason to our fellow human beings.

If Jesus is nonexistent, unworthy, inaccessible or unreliable in any way, then nothing much about him ultimately matters.

Newbigin's bold affirmation urgently invites us to ask hard questions about what, finally, we will do with Jesus—this same Jesus who reaches out his nail-pierced hand to each of us with a warm and engaging call of invitation, "Believe in me and follow."

This article was taken from the introduction to Jesus Matters: Good News for the Twenty-First Century *by James Krabill and David W Shenk (Herald Press). More information at www.mpn.net/jesusmatters.*

Growing in *faith*

Faith is key to our Christian walk.

by Tammy Darling

Because we live in a culture that increasingly relies on commercialism, materialism and secularism, it's not always easy to keep our faith, let alone increase it. But God expects us to grow in faith, for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is key to our Christian walk.

If you believe you lack faith, don't be discouraged. Many great men and women of powerful faith struggled at times with various faith-testing challenges. But they "won strength out of weakness" (Hebrews 11:34). Even through setbacks and failures, they grew in faith.

Choosing to obey and serve God will lead to difficulties that challenge our faith. But the Holy Spirit will enable us to endure such trials.

When you pray for a stronger faith, be aware that you will be given opportunities for your faith to grow; it doesn't just happen. If we pray for courage, for example, God doesn't just make us courageous. He gives us opportunities to be courageous. When we pray for patience, we don't instantly become patient. Instead, we are given circumstances in which to exercise patience. And so, with a prayer of increased faith, we must be on the lookout for opportunities to put our faith into action.

A life of faith requires that we get out of the box and, at times, step into uncomfortable situations.

A life of faith requires that we get out of the box and, at times, step into uncomfortable situations. We may no longer be assured of our customary comforts. Even our personal safety may be threatened.

Faith is a by-product of godly living. Faith increases over time, just as a wall is built brick by brick. While we like the instantaneous, faith just doesn't work that way. We develop and enrich our faith through frequent, regular contact with God.

We cannot muster up faith on our own and determine we will never doubt or question again. Living faith comes as a result of a maturing relationship with God.

No matter how long you've been saved, you can establish a pattern for Christian growth that can last a lifetime. Here's how:

- **Meditate on Scripture.** The Bible is packed with faith-strengthening verses that we should ponder as we commit them to memory because "faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Make it a habit to read your Bible daily with the express purpose of increasing your faith.
- **Be aware of your blessings.** Faith wanes when we forget the blessings of God. Perhaps this is why God admonishes us so many times in Scripture to "remember" and "not forget." When we consistently recall what the Lord has done for us as well as for others, our faith is strengthened. It's a way of preparing ourselves for future trials.
- **Be a river, not a lake.** A river is constantly flowing, whereas a lake is stagnant. For our faith to be strong and vibrant, we must continuously allow the things of Christ to move through us and on to others. Don't build a dam of self-protection; let the river flow.
- **Speak words of blessing.** Our words bring life—or death. Some of the most life-affirming words we can speak to others can be found in Numbers 6:24-26: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." As we speak words that uplift, encourage and affirm others, we not only bless them but build up our own spirit as well.
- **Pray without ceasing.** Spend as much time in prayer as possible. Attend prayer meetings. Participate in a prayer chain. Keep a record of answered prayers to look back on regularly. The

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AMBS window

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Shaping missional theology

Seeking to form missional leaders

David B. Miller, D.Min.

"As the Father sent me, so I send you ..." (John 20:21). Over the last decade, the language and priorities of the missional church have been embraced and promoted by both Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. On more than one occasion I have been asked, "Is this simply a new form of mennospeak?" Not so. A quick search of Internet sources reveals that this language and vision has entered the speech, identity and priorities of most Christian traditions in North America.

Others will ask if missional church is simply the latest fad language adopted in an attempt to reinvigorate religious fervor and prevent the demise of old institutions. To the contrary: Missional church vision begins by acknowledging ways the church has domesticated its witness since the time of Constantine when it made significant compromises as it gained imperial favor. As a result, the church has too often served as "chaplain to the culture," demonstrating little by way of transformation nor radical participation in the gospel. This critique, articulated early by Lesslie Newbigin *(Foolishness to the Greeks)*, continues to place hard questions before the church.

Missional church vision is also constructive. The church finds its reason for being in the heart and mission of God whose purpose is to seek, to heal and to reconcile humanity and the whole created order. To this end, God sent the Son to announce and embody the good news of the reign of God in the world. Jesus continued this sending in his commissioning of the disciples who are commanded to breathe in and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22) as the energizing and directing power of their apostleship. The life and teaching of Jesus demonstrate the means of our witness. The church, the fruit of this Spirit-led apostolic witness, continues to exist—not as a religious shelter or fortress—but as a demonstration and signpost of the reign of God. All functions of the church are part of this witness in order that "the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 3:10)

AMBS faculty have been at the center of both denominational and ecumenical articulation of missional theology and vision. Through the larger missional church conversation, what we

(continued on page 2)

Peter Ringenberg

Virginia Gerbrandt, student from Winnipeg, Man., talks with David Miller about her assignment as an intern at the Elkhart County jail.

Missional Leadership: What we are learning

Lois Y. Barrett, Ph.D.

Since the book *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Darrell Guder et al., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998) was published, many churches have caught the missional church vision and have been experimenting with missional change in congregational life. Here's a sample of what we have been learning in the past 11 years.

We aren't in Christendom anymore.

Christendom—that alliance between church and state, or church and culture—wasn't such a good idea in the first place. But in most of North America and many other places in the world, it isn't possible any more. The church can no longer expect special favors from government or from cultural norms. The number of North Americans of religions other than Christianity—or of no religion—has increased. We are beginning to see North America as a mission field. So, we're learning to apply the same tools of contextual analysis to the North American context that missionaries have been applying to overseas contexts for years.

Being missional is not just about outreach; it's also about congregational life.

We are learning that being missional is not just about proclaiming the reign of God in the world; it's also about being a sign of the reign of God "before the watching world." The church is called to demonstrate, by the practices of its life together, what God's future will be like. A church that practices forgiveness or caring for the poor in its midst is a witness to the world.

We can be missional with the Spirit's guidance.

Discovering our missional vocation as a congregation isn't simply a matter of surveys and strategic planning. It involves listening to Christ's Spirit among us and entering into a process of spiritual discernment together. We are learning to be on the lookout for God's actions and messages in the present and we are pointing them out. We are learning to lay aside our pet projects and preconceived notions and say to God, "Not my will, but yours be done."

We can learn best with other congregations.

There are a few highly innovative congregations that are able, on their own, to make the major change that becoming missional often requires. We learn best when we are involved in collaborative processes together with other congregations where there can be mutual encouragement and accountability. This is the point at which church agencies, schools and regional church bodies now have the opportunity to make a difference in making missional change a reality—by developing the kinds of collaborative processes so that congregations can become missional together.

Lois Y. Barrett is director of the AMBS–Great Plains Extension in North Newton, Kan., and associate professor of theology and Anabaptist studies at AMBS. She is coauthor of Missional Church *(Eerdmans, 1998) and* Treasure in Clay Jars; Patterns in Missional Faithfulness *(Eerdmans, 2004).* ●

Lois Barrett (right), a member of Mennonite Church of the Servant in Wichita, Kan., talks with Audrey Barrett, her mother, after a recent church service. Lois has been instrumental in shaping missional church theology for many years.

Seeking to form missional leaders

(continued from page 1)

may have been tempted to describe as "Anabaptist distinctives"—discipleship, visible community, reconciling service and Christian peacemaking—are being re-visited and embraced across Christian traditions. In turn, this larger conversation has challenged Mennonites to break out of ethnic enclaves, to refuse isolationism and to engage the culture by being living witnesses to the gospel.

Perhaps AMBS's greatest contribution comes as we seek to live out our stated mission to serve …

> the church as a learning community with an Anabaptist vision, educating followers of Jesus Christ to be leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world. (AMBS Mission Statement)

Here we seek to form missional leaders, in classrooms and supervised ministry experiences, in the daily disciplines of Christian community and spiritual friendships, to lead the church's witness in the world.

This is our identity and our calling.

*David B. Miller joined the AMBS faculty in summer as associate professor of missional leadership development. In this role, he directs the missional leadership development programs of AMBS and works with students doing ministry internships. Most recently David was pastor of University Mennonite Church, State College, Pa. See more about David at **www.ambs.edu**; select* Academics, *then* Faculty, *then the page for David.* ●

Congregations reach out to their neighborhoods

Listening and Reflecting

Jim S. Amstutz, Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

One of the challenges of missional leadership is always to be listening. We listen to one another, to God and to potential partners in mission. Then we reflect and ask the deeper questions. This summer, Akron Mennonite once again organized the popular Marketplace 29AD summer Bible School experience. Different this year was the fact that 50 of the 70 children who attended were from the local community. In the past, the numbers would have been reversed.

What made Marketplace so compelling that our members were willing go out and invite 50 community children to attend? One answer is all the time and effort that more than 100 AMC adults were investing. In our culture of economism, we want a good return on our investment. This is a familiar framework of marketing the church and attracting others to us.

Was there more? A parent asked, "Don't we do this for our children because we believe it's important, no matter the numbers?" Another said, "We've never had to worry about having enough kids come before." We discovered how receptive community children were to the invitation.

Instead of seeing Marketplace as an event primarily for our children, we began exploring what might be repeatable, transferable and sustainable as we also reach out to our local context. Where is God leading? What are we learning?

Jim S. Amstutz, co-pastor of Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.; Master of Divinity, AMBS, 1987; Doctor of Ministry in Missional Leadership, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2008.

Children in the neighborhood of Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church outnumbered children of the congregation at summer Bible school when they experienced Marketplace 29 AD.

Music, food and fun in a Vancouver neighbourhood

Ingrid Schultz, First United Mennonite Church, Vancouver, B.C.

For several years our Outreach and Service Committee has planned a community BBQ to thank the community for being good neighbours and to let them know about the church's programs. This year the committee decided to partner with other south Vancouver churches and Kingcrest, an organization that brings five of our churches together to welcome newcomers to our neighbourhood. We offered English as a Second Language classes, a "Meaning of Life" class and an international dinner. We organized a block party where we had food, live music from musicians from all of our churches, tables letting people know about our churches' programs and activities for children provided by the young adults who run our after-school drop-in centre. Three hundred neighbours came, ate, visited and enjoyed the music. We all had a great time and once again saw the benefit of working together with other churches in reaching out to our neighbours in this diverse south Vancouver neighbourhood.

Ingrid Schultz, pastor at First United Mennonite Church, Vancouver, B.C.; Master of Divinity, 1992. ●

Members of First Mennonite Church, Vancouver, B.C., mingle with neighbours at a summer barbeque hosted by churches in the south part of the city.

Your gifts at work

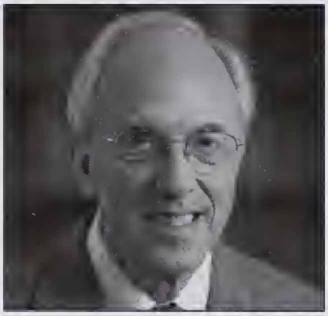
Forty-one percent of the seminary's support comes from donations, and most of these come from individuals, congregations and conferences. This year, 95 students (61 percent of our study body) are relying on these generous donations as they receive financial aid or scholarships totaling $134,152.

One form of this financial aid is a matching grant program. When a congregation or conference supports a specific full-time student, AMBS matches that support, dollar for dollar, up to $750, and matches any additional support on a one-to-four basis up to the cost of tuition. This fall, 49 students are receiving aid directly from congregations and conferences. Because of undesignated gifts to AMBS's annual fund, AMBS is matching these church and conferences gifts with an additional $27,233 this fall. ●

President's Window

One of the principal changes in North American Mennonite reality in the last century is the re-awakening of the mission consciousness so characteristic of early Anabaptism. In the first half of the 1900s, mission was something "out there" which had limited impact on the sending congregations. On the home front, the church remained relatively separate from the outside world.

In the recent half century, since World War II, mission consciousness has gradually pushed us to more engagement with the larger world. Now mission is a two-way conversation in which the church itself is changed by the encounter. This is expressed in the current emphasis among us on the need to transform our established congregations into greater missional consciousness and mode of action.



At AMBS we are committed to support the vision of our constituent denominations to be missional churches. Our mission statement says we are about the task of "educating followers of Jesus Christ to be leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world." To that end we have, for example, called David B. Miller to a faculty position in Missional Leadership Development.

To be a missional church has its own challenges. To engage the world of unbelief and materialism is to raise the burning issue of who is going to influence whom. Is our commitment to a counter-cultural gospel going to be a catalyst by which the Spirit transforms unconverted lives? Or will the spirit of the age with the allure of the world's values subvert the church?

The writers of in this issue of *AMBS Window* allude to another challenge. The mission of which we speak is not first of all the church's mission. It is God's mission and, therefore, in some sense that mission is larger than the people, structure and program of the church. Yet the church is, or at least should be, the primary sign of God's missional activity in the world. We don't just look beyond our walls to discern what God is doing "out there." If we cannot say, "Look to the people of God as the ideal for humanity," we are lacking in authenticity or nerve, or both. – George R Brunk III ●

Alumni News

Jerry Holsopple (Master of Divinity 1987) is a Fulbright Scholar, teaching at LCC International University in Klaipeda, Lithuania, for the 2009–2010 year. He is professor of visual and communication arts at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

Paul Heidebrecht (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 2000) is director of Mennonite Central Committee Canada's Ottawa (Ont.) office. In fall 2008, he earned a Ph.D. in religious studies from Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisc. He and Carmen Brubacher (MDiv 2000) and their family live in Ottawa.

The doctoral dissertation of **Weyburn W. Groff** (Bachelor of Divinity 1954; former faculty) has been published by the Institute of Mennonite Studies and Herald Press. The book is titled *Satyagraha and nonresistance: A comparative study of Gandhian and Mennonite nonviolence.*

Shaping missional theology

The following faculty, past and present, have been influential in shaping missional theology for AMBS and the wider church.

- **John Howard Yoder**
  The Politics of Jesus and *Body Politics; Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* by John Howard Yoder have been essential to missional church thought and practice
- **Wilbert Shenk**
  Wilbert, a former professor of missiology, is widely recognized for leadership in fostering the Gospel and Culture conversations in North America
- **Alan and Eleanor Kreider:**
  The Kreiders have helped to develop the missional conversation in United Kingdom. Alan is a retired professor and Eleanor serves periodically as sessional faculty
- **Lois Barrett**
  Serving as associate professor and director of AMBS–Great Plains, Lois was coauthor of *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Eerdmans 1998) and editor/coauthor of *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns of Missional Faithfulness* (Eerdmans 2004).
- **Walter Sawatsky**
  Walter travels widely in Europe and Russia as a consultant. As director of the Mission Studies Center at AMBS he edits *Mission Focus: Annual Review,* a journal that fosters theological discussion and sharing of missional vision among scholars and mission workers. ●

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The purpose of *AMBS Window* is to invite readers to call people to leadership ministries, and to provide ways for readers to become involved with AMBS through financial support, prayer support and student recruiting.

Editor: Mary E. Klassen
Designer: Nekeisha Alexis-Baker

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more time we spend in communication with God, the more our faith will grow.

- **Share the journey.** Get together regularly with a fellow believer who is also seeking to grow in faith. "Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wits of another" (Proverbs 27:17). Spend time together studying and reflecting on spiritual matters.
- **Restore someone's faith.** Your own faith will increase as you boost the faith of others. Extend kindness and unconditional love wherever you go. Help heal a wounded heart. "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).
- **Fast.** While many of us neglect this spiritual discipline, it is biblical and necessary. Jesus fasted; so should we. Combine your prayer time with fasting, seeking a vibrant faith.
- **Consider God's greatness.** "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" (Psalm 8:3-4). Meditating on the awesomeness of God is a great faith-booster.
- **Develop an attitude of gratitude.** Start each day with a prayer of thanks to God for the gift of a new day. We can be grateful for God's presence and involvement in our lives no matter what we are going through. This is why we are told to give thanks in all things. While we don't have to give thanks for them, we can give thanks in the midst of them.
- **Step out in faith.** Faith must be activated for it to be of any use. A vibrant faith is characterized by a willingness to take a leap of faith whenever needed. We will never have all the pieces of the puzzle in place at once. As we take a step of faith the next step becomes obvious and so on until the picture is complete. Trust God for what lies ahead but be willing to move when he says, "Go."

Tammy Darling lives in Three Springs, Pa.

Blackbirds

by Julie Cadwallader-Staub

I am 52 years old, and have spent
truly the better part
of my life out-of-doors
but yesterday I heard a new sound above my head
a rustling, ruffling quietness in the spring air

and when I turned my face upward
I saw a flock of blackbirds
rounding a curve I didn't know was there
and the sound was simply all those wings
just feathers against air, against gravity
and such a beautiful winning
the whole flock taking a long, wide turn
as if of one body and one mind.

How do they do that?

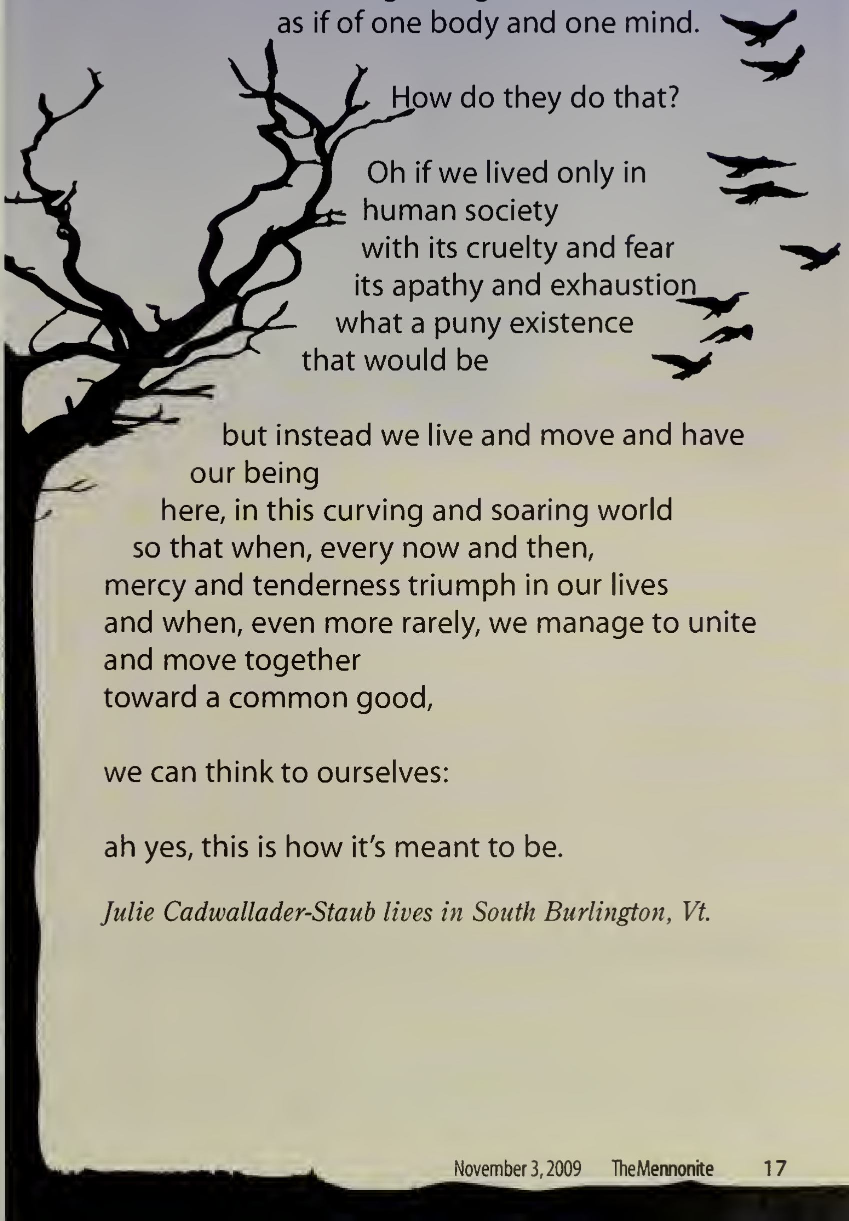
Oh if we lived only in
human society
with its cruelty and fear
its apathy and exhaustion
what a puny existence
that would be

but instead we live and move and have
our being
here, in this curving and soaring world
so that when, every now and then,
mercy and tenderness triumph in our lives
and when, even more rarely, we manage to unite
and move together
toward a common good,

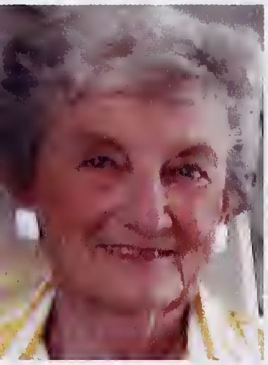
we can think to ourselves:

ah yes, this is how it's meant to be.

Julie Cadwallader-Staub lives in South Burlington, Vt.


Dreamstime.com

Afghanistan needs help, not bombs



Ethel K. Harder is a retired educator in Reedley, Calif.

What does the word “Afghanistan” conjure up in your mind? More young Americans maimed and killed? Much-needed funds for here at home instead of going for ammunition, vehicles, support services to fight yet again? Fractured, traumatized families due to separation? Widespread disruption of the norm for the people of this impoverished country?

According to *Hightower Lowdown* (February): “Poverty—about 70 percent of Afghans (attempt) to live on less than $2 per day. The national literacy rate is at 28 percent.” These people need help. “A life expectancy of only 45 years and the world’s highest infant mortality rate.” These people need what is now largely nonexistent—expanded and greatly improved health care. “Afghanistan has no substantial industry and little economic development. Subsistence farming is the only occupation for most of the population. Sadly, the country’s most marketable product is opium—92 percent of the world’s supply comes from the poppies raised on this hardscrabble land.” How tragic that these impoverished people seem to have few options to sustain themselves and their families!

These people need great humanitarian effort from those of us who have it so good, not more bombing.

Seventy-five percent of the population lives in small villages (less than 300 residents in each). The mountainous terrain becomes forbidding and a great trial for farming and travel. Even in the capital there is inadequate electric power. Roads are nonexistent or poor, making all travel, including military, a challenge. “The weather can be brutal.” These people need great humanitarian effort from those of us who have it so good, not more bombing, killing and desecration of this fragile land.

The *Fresno Bee* (March 2) offers the following glimmer of goodness: an effort of U.S. troops in Afghanistan under the leadership of Army Captain Matthew Crowe. He is to fulfill “the Obama administration’s plan to end the Taliban insurgency in part by delivering on unfulfilled U.S. vows to lift ordinary Afghans out of the crush of poverty and illiteracy.” Crowe says dealing with the locals is the most important thing he does. “Blowing stuff up doesn’t have the same effect as what I do in town by helping the locals,” says Crowe. “Some current basic proposals include building a $684,000 system to provide clean water, improve sanitation and contribute $2 million for badly needed construction equipment.” Abdul Ebrahimi, mayor of Maydan Shahr, has stated goals of improving public transportation and building a covered gym to supplement a soccer field and basketball courts. “The United States hopes that by being partners with officials like Ebrahimi across the country, popular faith can be restored in local authorities.”

Other humanitarian agencies are working at showing friendship and care for the Afghan people. In the winter of 1995, Mennonite Central Committee shipped 25,000 metric tons of wheat, lentils and oil to alleviate food shortages for those most effected. At the present time, using an annual budget of more than $500,000, MCC is supporting five schools, working with a partner agency, International Help The Afghan Children. MCC is also supplying peace education curriculum in seven additional schools and supporting an eye treatment hospital in Southern Afghanistan.

“Merely putting more troops in Afghanistan to do more of what the Bush administration did will not produce better results,” says the article. “Indeed, without a fundamental shift in policy, things could go badly for the Obama administration in Afghanistan.”

The fallacy of war: Dwight David Eisenhower, possibly the U.S. president with the strongest military background, stated in 1946: “I hate war, as only a soldier who has lived it can, as only one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity.” That was 63 years ago. Have we learned anything? If war was effective, if war worked, there would be no need for it. As Andy Rooney said on *60 Minutes* (March 8): “War is civilization at its worst.”

Many of us profess to follow God’s laws and Christ’s teachings. Jesus was the one who radically changed thinking and behaviors and will do so today. He created the human heart and can cause hearts to soften and change. After all, we know in our hearts that love is the answer.

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of *The Mennonite*, the board for The Mennonite, Inc., or Mennonite Church USA.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Questions and wise elders**—Moriah Hurst
- **Will we throw the ribbon away?**—Willis Horst

Sara Wenger Shenk new AMBS leader

Associate dean from Eastern Mennonite Seminary to begin by October 2010.

Sara Wenger Shenk, associate dean at Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS) in Harrisonburg, Va., has been named president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. She will begin the new assignment no later than Oct. 1, 2010, following several months of orientation and preparation. The AMBS board made the appointment at the Oct. 22-24 meetings in Elkhart.

The Mennonite Education Agency board and Mennonite Church Canada Christian Formation Council gave their approval to Wenger Shenk as the candidate of choice prior to the decision by the AMBS board.

Wenger Shenk has been a member of the faculty and administration of EMS since 1995. In addition to serving as associate dean, she is associate professor of Christian practices.

Randall Jacobs, Goshen, Ind., chair of the presidential search committee and new chair of the AMBS board, says, "Dr. Wenger Shenk represents a unique combination of gifts and experiences, including teaching and administration in theological education, cross-cultural ministry, church planting and writing for both scholarly and popular audiences. Perhaps more importantly, Dr. Wenger Shenk is grounded in Jesus, deeply respectful of the church and passionate about Anabaptist theological education."

Her scholarship and commitment to the church are evident in the wide range of books, chapters and articles she has written. This work includes *Thank You for Asking: Conversing with Young Adults About the Future Church* (Herald Press, 2005), *Anabaptist Ways of Knowing: A Conversation About Tradition-Based Critical Education* (Cascadia, 2003), *Coming Home: A Thoughtful Resource for Fathers, Mothers, and the Rebirth of the Family* (Good Books, 1992) and *Why Not Celebrate!* (Good Books, 1987). Her dissertation is "Toward An Anabaptist Educational Theory," presented to the faculty of Union Theological Seminary and The Presbyterian School of Christian Education in August 1998.

Wenger Shenk has been a "Real Families" columnist for *The Mennonite* and contributed to *Mennonite Quarterly Review, Leader Magazine, Vision* and *Sojourners.*

Wenger Shenk believes that worship, our "primary theology," sustains and grounds all aspects of theological education. One evidence of this is the leadership she and Gerald Shenk, her husband, have given over the last three years to The Table, an emerging Mennonite congregation in Harrisonburg, Va.

In addition, Wenger Shenk is involved in the life of the church at denominational and conference levels. She serves as the Virginia Mennonite Conference representative to the Constituency Leaders Council of Mennonite Church USA and has recently joined the MC USA binational worship council. From 1993-2001 she was member-at-large for the Faith and Life Commission of Virginia Mennonite Conference.

"Sara Wenger Shenk's scholarship, commitment to pastoral theological education, love and passion for the church, and deep spirituality are precious gifts that she brings to AMBS and the wider church," says Carlos Romero, executive director of Mennonite Education Agency. "Her experiences as teacher, writer, pastor, administrator, as well as conference involvement, have served to prepare her for this calling from the church."

Ray Friesen, Swift Current, Saskatchewan, chair of the AMBS board through the October meetings, said, "Sara Wenger Shenk has a passion for Jesus and the church and a vision for what that means in the 21st century that is informed by our history and shaped by our times. Her training and experience have prepared her to lead AMBS into new vistas of pedagogical creativity that are needed if AMBS is to be a seminary for the entire church, particularly for those parts of the church where growth is strongest."

Having earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Eastern Mennonite University, Wenger Shenk pursued study at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif., and completed a master's degree in 1986 at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill. She received the Doctor of Education degree in 1999.

From 1977 to 1983 and again from 1986 to 1989, Wenger Shenk and her husband served on a study-service appointment with Eastern Mennonite Missions and Mennonite Central Committee in the former Yugoslavia.

George R. Brunk III is serving as interim president and will continue until Wenger Shenk begins her new role.—*Mary Klassen*

Her experiences as teacher, writer, pastor, administrator, as well as conference involvement, have served to prepare her for this calling from the church.
—Carlos Romero

Sister-care event offers 'sowing' circle

Over 175 women gather to explore gifts, discuss healthy boundaries.

Heidi Martin

Three unidentified women participate in the Oct. 2-3 Sister-Care seminar in Middletown, Pa.

A "sowing" circle of 178 women from 54 churches gathered Oct. 2-3 for the Sister-Care seminar in Middletown, Pa. Sponsored by Mennonite Women USA, Sister-Care invited women from the Atlantic Coast and Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite conferences to explore their gifts in ministering to women in the church while maintaining healthy boundaries.

Kathy Wenger, member of James Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., and Donna Mast, member of Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa., played large roles in coordinating the weekend event with facilitator Rhoda Keener.

"God has gifted women with the desire to nurture each other," said Mast. "[That is] something that often happens naturally whenever women gather together.

"Yet there are times when the level of caring needed is beyond our abilities or knowledge. Sister-Care offers some foundational information and basic skills on how we can best meet the needs of another person yet also how to know when we can't."

> God has gifted women with the desire to nurture each other. —Donna Mast

Several years ago, Keener, executive director of Mennonite Women USA, saw the need for women to gather and care for one another within church circles. She met with a group of women in the Franklin Mennonite Conference for a year of discussion and discernment. The result of their meetings is the Sister-Care seminar and manual. Keener launched the seminar in Virginia in February 2008.

The Oct. 2 evening session highlighted the "C" in care, which stands for "Called to care." The rest of the sessions continued defining the acronym: (A) attending and self-care, (R) resource sharing and (E) encouraging.

Women were drawn to the event for a variety of reasons. Annabelle Buss, Emmaus, Pa., and Ramona Martin, Reamstown, Pa., intend to use the information to better care for family and friends.

"I heard of this through the church," said Buss. "This is what I do. I'm a widow and a caregiver. I come from a large family that takes care of each other, and I like to be there for friends and neighbors."

"I expect to meet a lot of different people and hear about other people's experiences," said Martin just before the first session. "We need to know how to meet each person where they are at."

Martin's expectations were fulfilled on Oct. 3, when Pam Witwer shared her personal experience with bipolar disorder. Describing her journey from childhood to adulthood moved many women to tears. Her testimony concluded with hope as she described the enduring care of her sisters at Neffsville Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

Another reason women attended the event was to receive practical resources to use within the work and church environments.

Ramona Santiago, Lancaster, Pa., is a social worker in the Lancaster (Pa.) city schools, where need is devastatingly high.

"I want to learn what else I can do to help my sisters and others in the community," said Santiago. "I want to take this information to my school and church and also into my neighborhood."

Jeannie Eshleman, Baltimore, Md., is on the spiritual life committee at North Baltimore Mennonite Church. This pastoral support team provides for various needs in the congregation, including spiritual, emotional and financial. "It would be ideal to be able to take back tools to relate with women-specific situations," said Eshleman.

These women received general and specific tools, one being information on Philhaven, an agency of Lancaster Mennonite Conference that provides services for people with chronic mental illness.

Philhaven addresses overall wholeness with interest in emotional, spiritual and physical needs. Representative Meryl Gibbel presented information on when to consult professional help and how to do so.

Mennonite women are moving from the sewing circles of old to new forms of the "sowing" circle—where hope and encouragement is shared in ways that are useful for the present time.—*Heidi Martin*

Quilting connects generations of women

Goshen College students join College Mennonite women for quilt project.

Usually when Goshen (Ind.) College students attend the annual Michiana Mennonite Relief Sale, they see quilts auctioned off for the good cause of global relief that were made by people who remind them of their grandmothers back home.

But at this year's relief sale in Goshen in late September, a group of students were the creators of number 244 in the quilt program book: a 62-inch -square sampler wall hanging with an international feel of blue, purple, red and yellow Batik fabrics.

The quilt was the culmination of a new program, "Passing on Traditions," which has not only produced contributions to aid in international relief and development but has also built bridges of friendship across generations.

During weekly Wednesday night gatherings after supper together, about 50 college students—both men and women of varying levels of experience—contributed to the quilt during last spring. Though the group participants changed weekly, they cut the fabric, arranged the blocks and sewed them together. And they were joined by about 20 avid quilters—all women—from College Mennonite Church (CMC) to do the framing and quilting over several months. During these evenings together, students also learned how to tie comforters and knit while sharing stories and fellowship as their hands and fingers moved needles and thread to create something new.

Kelly Frey, a sophomore nursing major from Shipshewana, Ind., attends CMC on Sundays while in school and found that the Wednesday night gathering offered a good break from her busy academic studies.

"I learned that quilting and knitting with women equals quality conversation and bonding," Frey said.

Talashia Keim, pastor of young adults at CMC, appreciates this ministry of her church which has been driven and run by members, as she attends and gets to know the students.

"It's fun to work and talk. You get into different kinds of conversations when you are working on a project," she says.

She has also seen friendships develop in that setting that have continued on. Once, she says, a student shared how she missed cooking while in college, and a woman from CMC invited her over to cook in her kitchen.

The CMC women taught by demonstrating techniques and giving feedback, from how to hide a knot to how to make small, even stitches. When Tice found herself in uncharted territory as she was quilting, her elders offered her expert advice to handle some of the trickier moments.

Jodi H. Beyeler

Goshen College first-year student Amanda Kwist (right) and Shirley Dyck (left), a long-time quilter and member of College Mennonite Church, work on cutting fabric together.

"I learned how to get your needle out of the fabric when it has snapped in half and part of it is stuck in the fabric," she says, with a smile. "I also learned to just tear a tiny piece of the batting off, wet it with your tongue, and use it to get rid of a blood stain that you've just inadvertently created if you don't have anything else handy."

The group was formed out of the theatrical production of *Quilters* in May 2008. Goshen College professor of music Deb Brubaker, a quilter herself, was one of the directors of that musical, and in teaching the actresses and crew how to quilt, excitement and interest developed for the lost art. She made connections with her church—College Mennonite, which shares the college campus—and the idea for a longer-term opportunity to learn the art and craft of quilting was developed by Edna Rieth and others from the church's Mennonite Women group. When "Passing on Traditions" began in the fall semester, the group quickly knotted five comforters to send to refugee camps through Mennonite Central Committee.

When the 2009 Relief Sale quilt auction was over, the Batik wall hanging the students had completed—with varying sizes of stitches—had first sold for $350, and then was donated back to the sale and sold for another $170.

The money raised was important but maybe not the most important outcome. Sommers says: "What I like about it is the big stitches next to the small stitches. I see it as a coming together."—*Jodi H. Beyeler for Goshen College*

CLC is making progress on demographics

Constituency Leaders Council, in private, also discusses resolution on conflict.

Women comprised half the Constituency Leaders Council meeting Oct. 19-21 at the Williamsburg (Va.) Christian Retreat Center. It was the highest percentage in the history of CLC, said Dorothy Nickel Friesen, vice chair of CLC and Western District Conference minister. The gathering also drew the highest percentage of first-time attendees and one of the highest percentages of under-represented racial/ethnic participants.

Discussion of resolutions: A resolution on conflict, "Growing Together as Communities Even in Conflict," passed by delegates at Convention 2009, was the primary focus of the meeting. However, the discussion was in closed sessions on Oct. 19 and 20. Representatives from area conferences, African-American Mennonite Association and Iglesia Menonita Hispana shared their progress in responding to the Executive Board (EB) on the resolution.

The CLC also discussed the format and value of resolutions at churchwide conventions. Several table groups expressed a desire to see drafts of the resolutions prior to the convention so that delegates could communicate with their congregations and conferences.

Resolutions are good if there is commitment and follow through—financially and otherwise, said Ivonne Díaz, director of Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church).

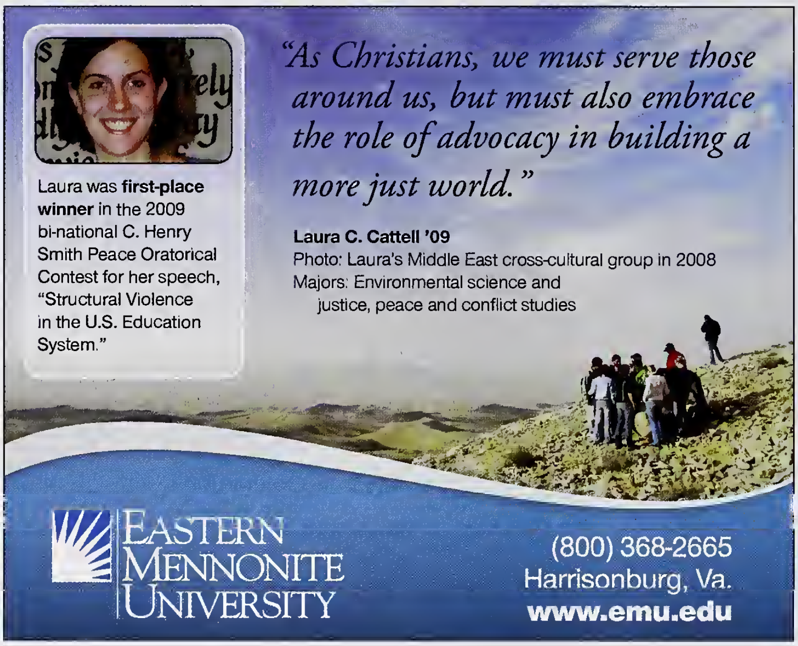
"People would think a lot more carefully," Díaz said. She provided an example of this disconnect: the 2003 resolution on immigration and the lack of attendance at the consultation on immigration in September.

Antiracism task force: Karl Shelly, member of CLC's antiracism task force, announced that CLC is making progress on its antiracist goals. With five more racial/ethnic people, this meeting would have met its goal of 30 percent participation, Shelly said. Shelly placed five empty chairs at the front of the room to symbolize those missing.

Another member of the task force, Iris de León-Hartshorn, led CLC in an experiment, the "Circle Process," to encourage deep listening at table groups. In this process, participants pass an object around the table, and the person who has it is the only person permitted to speak.

"It's one thing to invite people to come [to CLC]," de León-Hartshorn said, "but then we need to hear their voices [when they come]."

On Oct. 21, conferences reported on church-planting efforts and added dots to a map of the United States to indicate locations. In total, conference leaders reported 27 new congregations, 88 church plants in various stages and 13 locations of exploration.—*Anna Groff*



Laura was **first-place winner** in the 2009 bi-national C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical Contest for her speech, "Structural Violence in the U.S. Education System."

"As Christians, we must serve those around us, but must also embrace the role of advocacy in building a more just world."

Laura C. Cattell '09
Photo: Laura's Middle East cross-cultural group in 2008
Majors: Environmental science and justice, peace and conflict studies

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PENNSYLVANIA to EUROPE (June 19 - July 2)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE (June 24 - July 5)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE II with JOHN SHARP (June 29 - July 12)
ITALY, AUSTRIA and GERMANY (July 7-17)
ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (July 23 - August 4)
SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29 - August 11)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE III with PAUL ZEHR (September 5-18)
THE ROAD to JERUSALEM (September 11-22)
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Work instead of worship on Sundays

Faith Mennonite and Philippi Mennonite serve in place of worship annually.

Members of Faith Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan., wanted to do something special to celebrate its 50-year anniversary last year.

Around that time, an article appeared in the *Wichita Eagle* about a Presbyterian church that held a service day in honor of its anniversary. Also, Pastor Gordon Smith had been contemplating ideas from Faith in Action, a program that encourages Christians to "be the church," not just go to church.

So Faith Mennonite Church decided to serve on Sunday.

They put together a task force that planned a time of service in place of morning worship. That day went so well, Faith Mennonite decided to do it all over again this year.

On Sept. 30, 138 people from Faith Mennonite went to 11 different job sites, says Harold Wiebe from the task force. After working eight hours, they returned to the church for a celebration service, which included photos from projects. The task force also provided ongoing service projects for members to sign up for to keep the momentum going, says Wiebe.

"People have been surprised that a congregation would come together in this way to serve the community," says Smith. "It's been a powerful witness for people."

"We noticed how this also transforms us," he says. "Showing God's love in a concrete way in our community translates into experiencing God's love ourselves."

Some members went to the Laundromat, where they paid for people's laundry and volunteered to play with their children. Another group stayed back at the church and worked on classroom projects for teachers in the area. Other teams worked on repair projects at homes in the community, at the Harvey Country homeless shelter and at a home for children, as well as at the local Mennonite Central Committee center and Kidron-Bethel Village, a retirement community.

Prior to the day, members studied the book of Luke in Sunday school and other groups. The task force also offered devotional sheets for three weeks before the day.

"We tried to help people prepare their hearts and minds," says Wiebe, leader in the task force, and Smith describes the day as "bathed in prayer."

Many members serve at Habitat for Humanity or the Etcetera Shop individually, but serving collectively makes more of an impact, he says. Smith says he affirmed the individual service members already commit to but also encouraged members to work together.

Mike Miller

Lester and Mary Beth Lind lay block during Philippi Mennonite service project.

For some members, this day proved a stretch. "We're used to coming to church on Sunday," Smith says. Some members even wondered if it's OK to work on the Sabbath. To respond, the task force described the day as service, not work.

Smith also believes they received a better turnout on the Sunday than they would have on a Saturday. Next year, Faith Mennonite will explore inviting other churches in the community to join.

Philippi Mennonite Church

For the past decade, Philippi (W.Va.)Mennonite Church members have worked on a foundation in preparation for a new house to be built each summer through a local service agency with volunteer labor and donated material. About five years ago, they started combining a work day and church service on a Sunday each year.

Mike Miller, a member of Philippi, also works for Heart and Hand—the service agency that coordinates the projects.

"Mixing hard work with prayer, singing and fellowship help remind us of why we do service work in the first place," says Miller.

Conversations emerge during the project that might not have otherwise happened.

"As we were working … one member of the congregation challenged us to share verses from the Bible we had memorized," says Anni Corley, a member of Philippi.

"A church working on Sunday must be a curious spectacle, but Jesus freaked out the religious community with his interpretation of how to live life, including what is acceptable on the Sabbath," Miller says. "The day feels holy to me."—*Anna Groff*

A church working on Sunday must be a curious spectacle, but Jesus freaked out the religious community on how to live life.—Mike Miller

This article is available as a podcast at www.The Mennonite.org

ONLINE

MWC is growing

1.6 million Anabaptists on new map

A new Mennonite World Conference (MWC) map shows that Mennonite, Brethren in Christ and related churches (national conferences) can now be found in 80 countries around the world. Baptized membership has climbed to slightly more than 1.6 million. The new map will go into a second printing with revised numbers from the first printing. The new figures for global Anabaptists by continent are as follows: Africa, 592,106; Asia, 265,447; Latin America, 169,864; Europe, 64,740; North America, 523,969, making a grand total of 1,616,126, up from the 1,612,301 total indicated on the map's first printing.

Africa, the top continental region since 2003, continues to have the highest percentage of all global baptized members, with just under 37 percent. Second is North America (32.4 percent), followed by Asia (16.4 percent), Latin America and the Caribbean (10.5 percent) and Europe (4 percent).

The six countries with the highest numbers of baptized members are the same as in 2006, but the order again has changed. Ethiopia with 172,306 members has moved into third place, ahead of both India (156,922 members) and Canada (136,866 members). The United States still ranks in first place (387,103 members), and the Democratic Republic of Congo is second (220,444 members). Indonesia (88,458 members) ranks sixth.

Copies of the map will be available for purchase from MWC offices. The map will also be posted on the MWC Web site.—*Mennonite World Conference*

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TheMennonite

Church remembers bombing anniversary

Nanih Waiya Indian Mennonite Church gathers after 45 years since tragedy.

More than 120 people worshiped together Sept. 20 at Nanih Waiya Indian Mennonite Church near Philadelphia, Miss., to commemorate God's faithfulness during tragic events of the 1960s. It had been 45 years since the first of three racially motivated bombings to the same church facility. Two others occurred in 1966.

This is Nanih Waiya's story.

In the early 1960s Mennonites Nevin and Esther Bender from Greenwood, Del., were in ministry among the Choctaw people in Neshoba County. The Benders' two daughters, Millie and Emma, with Emma's husband, Glenn Myers, were assisting them.

In 1963, volunteers helped the congregation build the Nanih Waiya Mennonite Church building about a mile from the historic Indian mound by the same name. Nanih Waiya means "leaning hill" in Choctaw.

Then came midnight on Sept. 19, 1964, when the small cement church building exploded from dynamite. Glenn Myers, who attended the service, remembered coming home from a football game, getting a call about the bombing of the church and going to see it. The church was destroyed; part of the roof remained, held up by studs.

The next day, people from the community and others arrived to view the destruction. Plans were made to clean up the mess immediately, to salvage what they could and rebuild. Hatred and bitterness were absent on the part of the church community, according to those who were in the congregation at the time. Even though they were sad and couldn't understand why this had happened, all were committed to the church.

Church members, local volunteers and Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers worked together to clean up and rebuild the church. Only 23 days after the bombing, the congregation met for the first time in the partially finished building. Fifty-nine people were there to celebrate the belief that love and hope are stronger than violence.

The group continued to meet, and they needed more room, so they added to the building, again with the help of volunteers, including college students. A dedication was held in November 1965.

"It was quite a shock when on Feb. 19, 1966, the building was dynamited again," Emma Myers said. "This happened soon after the youth group had a Valentine's Day banquet in the building. Again the group rallied together to clean up and rebuild. This time it wasn't completely destroyed, so the annex was saved, and with the help of volunteers, the building was rebuilt."

Carol Roth

Dorothy Thompson was one of the first Choctaw natives who attended Nanih Waiya Indian Mennonite Church as a child. Today she is part of the congregation.

Ten months after the second bombing, Dec. 23, 1966, the youth were caroling late at night.

"We were together in a church bus visiting the various homes of church members and singing Christmas carols. We planned to go back to the church for a party. There were food and drinks waiting for us there. When we returned to the church, we found a pile of rubble with the dust still settling," remembers Dave Weaver, Jr., who was 17 at the time. "There was a strange feeling in the pit of my stomach."

This time most of the annex was saved, but the main part of the church would have to be rebuilt.

During the service of remembrance, pastor Harvey Yoder invited the people to a time of sharing. About a half dozen people who were there the night of the December 1966 bombing spoke during the service of the shock they felt. "Who would do this?" was a repeated question. And while the community feels no hatred for the unknown perpetrators, another question remains: Why?

"Today we still pray for the people who bombed our church," said Weaver, who lives now in Gulfport, Miss.

Doug Herring, Louisville, Miss., who lived near the church in the 1960s and was invited to speak during the service about the church's future, was a local volunteer who helped repair the roof after one of the bombings.

He reminded the congregation that it is only when we genuinely love our enemies that we can truly forgive.—*Emma Myers, Carol Roth, Dave Weaver and others contributed.*

CALENDAR

Hesston Mennonite Church of Hesston, Kansas, will celebrate its ***100 year anniversary*** Nov. 27-29, 2009. Those who have been associated with the congregation over the years are invited to join the church family as we celebrate a journey of faith and anticipation of God's continued leading. For more information, call 620-327-4885 ext. 100 or Email: hessonmc@hesstonmc.org.

Philadelphia area Damascus Road Antiracism Analysis Training, Feb. 26-28, 2010, in Norristown, Pa. Join us for an in-depth study of systemic racism and a dismantling process that is slowly transforming the Mennonite Church. Online registration, English and Spanish brochures are available at www.slf.franconiaconference.org. For information contact Sharon Williams, 610-277-1729, sharonw@cavtel.net

WORKERS

Denlinger, Chet, was licensed in the Eastern Carolina District of Virginia Mennonite Conference for chaplaincy ministry in Elon, N.C., on Oct. 7.

Martin, Chad, was ordained as associate pastor at Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, Pa., on Oct. 11.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Bert, Maren Genevieve, Oct. 3, to Daryl and Carrie Stambaugh Bert, Austin, Texas.

Bontrager, Andrew Cash, Sept. 10, to Terry and Angela Brodhagen Bontrager, Wichita, Kan.

Brubaker, Lydia Hope, Oct. 9, to Eric and Peggy Sterling Brubaker, Harrisonburg, Va.

Chupp, Joshua TianGuang Hockman, born Feb. 23, 2006, in Guangxi, China. Received for adoption on May 18 by Kevin and Cynthia Hockman-Chupp, Canby, Ore.

Dutton, Brooke Danielle, Aug. 29, to Ryan and Laurie Dutton, Hartville, Ohio.

Hecht-Enns, Joseph Wade, born Sept. 9. Received for adoption on Oct. 8 by Albert and Melinda Hecht-Enns, Waterloo, Ontario.

Kulp, Shannon Brooke, Sept. 30, to Jay and Janelle Derstine Kulp, Ottsville, Pa.

Myers, Nolan Keith, Sept. 2, to Kevin and Jen Gingerich Myers, Indianapolis, Ind.

Shoemaker, Joel Aaron, Oct. 15, to Tim and Tama Duncan Shoemaker, Harrisonburg, Va.

Steiner, Eli Jacob, Oct. 18, to Rob and Sarah Burkholder Steiner, Goshen, Ind.

Wray, Zaylah Jewel, Oct. 8, to Andy and Keli Chisholm Wray, Hesston, Kan.

Yoder, Kasen Reed, Sept. 26, to Mike and Jill Riegsecker Yoder, Shipshewana, Ind.

MARRIAGES

Alderfer/Lucente: Ryan Alderfer, Sellersville, Pa., and Cara Lucente, Sellersville, Oct. 11, at Jericho Golf Club, New Hope, Pa.

Bartel/Voth: Bret Bartel, Augusta, Kan., and Brittany Voth, Hesston, Kan., Oct. 10, at First United Methodist Church, Augusta.

Bartlett/Geiser: Noreen Bartlett and Zachary Geiser, July 31, at Northside Christian Church.

Crawford/Miller: Jami Crawford, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, and Jeremy Miller, Wayland, Iowa, June 13, at St. Alphonsus, Mt. Pleasant.

Dutcher/O'Neill: Melissa Dutcher, Hartville, Ohio, and Cameron O'Neill, Hartville, Oct. 10, at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Hartville.

Frewen/Goins: Thomas Frewen, Dublin, Ireland, and Katherine Goins, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 15, at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

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Graber/Shrewsbury: Jon Graber, Crawfordsville, Iowa, and Kristina Shrewsbury, Cheyenne, Wyo., June 20, at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa.

Hochstetler/Nussbaum: Matthew Hochstetler, Orrville, Ohio, and Megan Nussbaum, Kidron, Ohio, Sept. 12, at Kidron Mennonite Church.

Molitor/Winkler: Glen Molitor, Greenwood, Ind., and Anna Winkler, Dalton, Ohio, Aug. 8, at Kidron Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio.

Nelson/Stoltzfus: Amanda Nelson, Lancaster, Pa., and Edward Zachary "Zach" Stoltzfus, Conestoga, Pa., Oct. 10, at the home of the groom in Conestoga.

Norris/Volkman: Tyler Norris, Delta, Ohio, and Elissa Volkman, Wauseon, Ohio, Oct. 3, at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Weaver/Wilson: Melissa Weaver, Telford, Pa., and Justin Wilson, Telford, Sept. 18.

DEATHS

Allebach, Marvin S., 80, Souderton, Pa., died Sept. 12. Spouse: Esther Nice Allebach. Parents: Paul F. and Elizabeth Souder Allebach. Children: David, Philip, Janice Ashley, Teresa Alderfer; nine grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 19 at Rockhill Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Amstutz, Anna S. Amstutz Sommer, 102, Kidron, Ohio, died Oct. 1. Spouse: Lloyd E. Sommer (deceased). Spouse: Benjamin U. Amstutz (deceased). Parents: Daniel B. and Fannie Zaugg Amstutz. Children: Don Sommer, Carol Yoder, Ann Troyer; stepchildren: Doris North, Shirley Toole, Ken Amstutz, Gloria Nussbaum; 22 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren; five great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 4 at Kidron Mennonite Church.

Becker, Agnes, 93, Aberdeen, Idaho, died Oct. 11. Parents: Peter J. and Anna Boese Becker. Funeral: Oct. 14 at First Mennonite Church, Aberdeen.

Bender, Dwight G., 82, Kalona, Iowa, died Oct. 8. Spouse: Henrietta June Hochstetler Bender (deceased). Parents: George S. and Sarah M. Eash Bender. Children: Julia Bender, Gloria Widmer, Donovan, Beth Bender; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 11 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa

Gerber, Loretta Joy Miller, 80, Benton, Ohio, died Aug. 12 of lymphoma. Spouse: Dennis Gerber. Parents: Dan and Mildred Miller. Children: Connie; two grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 15 at Martins Creek Mennonite Church, Holmes County, Ohio.

Good, Raymond M., 89, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died Oct. 14. Spouse: Olive Snider Good. Parents: Jacob and Irene Good. Children: Sandra Sittler, Sheri Brubacher; four grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 18 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

Hochstetler, Audrey Swartzendruber, 88, Kalona, Iowa, died Oct. 1. Spouse: Emery J. Hochstetler (deceased). Parents: Urie and Norma Kinsinger Swartzendruber. Children: Jim, Jane Garber, Marla Longenecker, Bill, Angela Fretz; 11 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 5 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa.

Klassen, Jerrie A. Ganger, 76, Goshen, Ind., died Sept. 6. Spouse: Otto Dyck Klassen (deceased). Parents: Howard and Gladys Shank Ganger. Children: Ruth Andrews, Frieda McRae, Bess Klassen-Landis, Michelle Antioho, Suzy Elliot; 18 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 5 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

"For the Record" is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. To submit information, log on to www.TheMennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access our online forms. You can also submit information by email, fax or mail:

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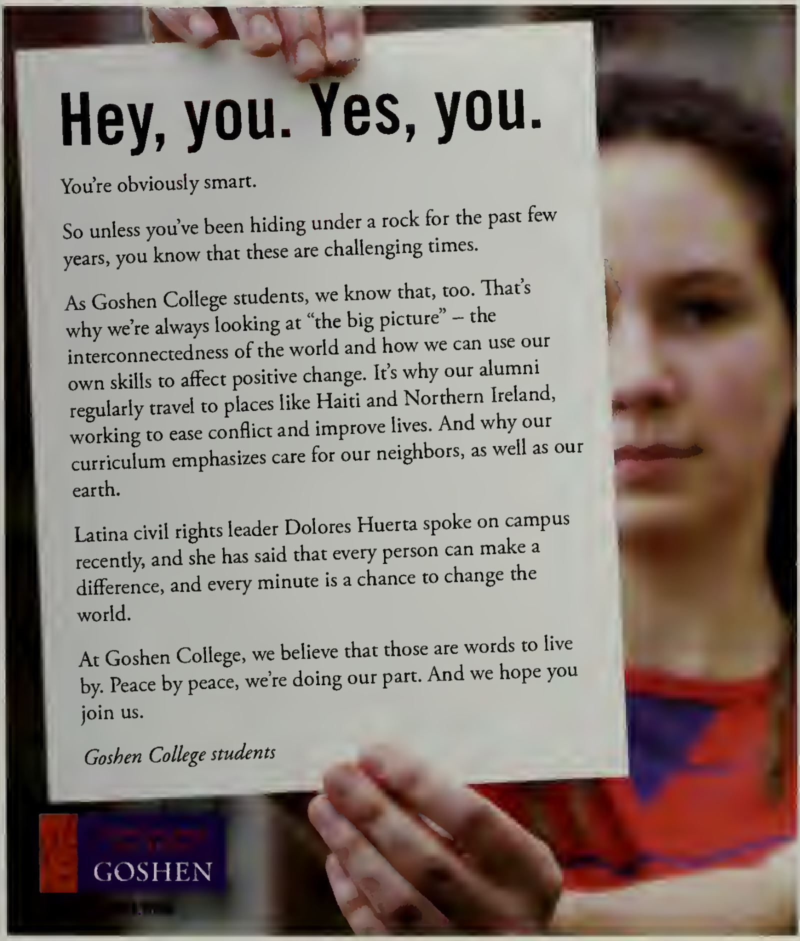
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Latina civil rights leader Dolores Huerta spoke on campus recently, and she has said that every person can make a difference, and every minute is a chance to change the world.

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Klinger, Doris E., 85, Archbold, Ohio, died Oct. 9. Parents: Fermer and Sarah Stuckey Klinger. Funeral: Oct. 12 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Landes, William W., 83, Souderton, Pa., died Sept. 25. Spouse: Florence Rittenhouse Landes. Spouse: Irene Doyle Landes. Parents: Bertha Cramer Landes. Children: Darlene Hartzwell, Leslie, Dennis, Ivan, Janie Landes; step-children: Herbert Rittenhouse, Gerald Rittenhouse, Thomas Rittenhouse, Jane Kratz, Gail Horning; nine grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 30 at Towamencin Mennonite Church, Kulpsville, Pa.

Miller, Richard W., 76, Archbold, Ohio, died Oct. 2 from injuries sustained in a bicycle/car accident. Parents: Martin J. and Carrie Sauder Miller. Funeral: Oct. 7 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Nafziger, Vern J., 91, Archbold, Ohio, died Oct. 13. Spouse: Evelyn Nofziger Nafziger. Parents: Charlie and Malinda Rufenacht Nafziger. Children: Melda Richer, Esther Badertscher, Daniel, Julia Beck, Norma Kauffman, Karleen Behnfeldt, Marvin; 18 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 16 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Nice, Clair Heckler, 76, Harleysville, Pa., died Oct. 11 of complications following a fall. Spouse: Mildred Hackman Nice. Parents: Elmer C. and Alma L. Heckler Nice. Children: Dale, Tim, Doug; five grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 16 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.

Sauder, John Allen, Jr., 54, Harrisonburg, Va., died Oct. 3. Spouse: Denise Berkshire Sauder. Parents: John Allen and Victoria Smith Sauder. Children: Dana, Ashley Miller, Derek; three grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 7 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Steiner, Elno W., 84, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 16 of injuries sustained in a fall. Spouse: Mabel L. Smeltzer Steiner. Parents: Homer and Bertha Zuercher Steiner. Children: Carol Sheerer, Gloria Hood, Charles O., David Lee, Timothy Ray, Donald L.; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 20 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

Troyer, Byron Nortell, 92, Chandler, Ariz., died Oct. 18 of kidney failure. Spouse: Elda Kauffman Troyer (deceased). Parents: Dr. George Selton and Katherine Sommers Troyer. Children: George, Elizabeth, Steven; 15 grandchildren; many great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 24 at Parkview Mennonite Church, Kokomo, Ind.

Yancey, Gerald M., 89. Beaver Falls, N.Y., died Oct. 20. Spouse: Lena Catherine Lyndaker Yancey. Parents: Edward E. and Rosella Zehr Yancey. Children: Jerry M., Dean R., Dr. Samuel, Violet Colwell, Merle G., Orson P., Annette Halko, Paula Zehr, Juanita Rose Yancey; 18 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 24 at Lowville Mennonite Church, Lowville, N.Y.

Yoder, Marilyn Ruth Weaver, 79, Sugarcreek, Ohio, died Oct. 18. Spouse: Dan R. Yoder. Parents: Andrew and Kate Miller Weaver. Children: Tim, Tom, Colleen Yoder, Diane Hardt, Lorie Rico; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 21 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church, Walnut Creek, Ohio.

Zuercher, Clayton A., 74, Orrville, Ohio, died July 28 of injuries sustained in a lawn mower accident. Spouse: Doris Gray Lehman Zuercher. Spouse: Alice L. Miller Zuercher (deceased). Parents: Isaac and Emma Lehman Zuercher. Children: Sue Schloneger, Darrel, Rita Richard; 10 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 2 at Kidron Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio.

New obituary policy

Beginning with the January 2010 issue of *The Mennonite*, additional information may be published in the obituary section. The following information will be free:

- **Name of deceased**
- **Age at death**
- **Hometown and state**
- **Cause of death**
- **Name(s) of spouse(s)**
- **Name(s) of parent(s)**
- **Name(s) of child(ren)**
- **Number of grandchildren**
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***Additional information* may be added at the usual rate for classified ads. This is currently $1.30 per word. A photograph may be added for $25. To submit this additional information: download the Word document from www.themennonite.org, email obituaries@themennonite.org to receive an electronic copy of the form, or call 800-790-2498 to receive a copy in the mail.**

***The Mennonite* reserves the right to edit obituaries for length and clarity.**

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I certify that all information furnished in this is true and complete.
Everett J. Thomas, Editor

Eastern Mennonite University seeks qualified candidates for the position of ***dean of the seminary and university vice president*** to provide leadership and oversight for all seminary programs and faculty. Eastern Mennonite Seminary is an accredited member of the Association of Theological Schools. It offers the three-year Master of Divinity degree, the two-year Master of Arts in Church Leadership and Master of Arts in Religion degrees, Clinical Pastoral Education and a one-year certificate program. The seminary is a member of the Council of Mennonite Seminaries and is approved by the United Methodist Church for the training of their candidates for ordination. The successful candidate will promote the philosophy, program quality and objectives of the seminary in maintaining academic standards, advancing institutional purposes and leading faculty recruitment. The seminary dean supervises all administrative staff in the seminary either directly or through delegation. As university vice president, the dean is a member of the President's Cabinet and represents the seminary in administrative matters through the regular channels of EMU. The seminary dean, along with the president, represents the seminary to the church constituencies and in theological education circles. Qualifications include leadership and administrative expertise, a doctoral degree in a discipline related to theological education, experience in church ministry and teaching in higher education, creative leadership in curriculum development, membership in a Mennonite church and a commitment to the mission of Mennonite/Anabaptist higher education.

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Pine Creek Chapel, an evangelical Anabaptist congregation in Arcadia, Fla., is seeking a ***pastor***. Interested candidates should email pinecreekchapel@gmail.com or call 863-494-9166.

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary invites applications for a .8 FTE position, ***access and digital services librarian***, to begin July 2010. This librarian will supervise circulation and lead the library's efforts to use current and emerging technologies in the provision of information services and resources. A master's degree from an ALA-accredited program is required, with further training in theology highly desirable. See a position description at www.ambs.edu/employment. Applicants should submit a resumé and letter of interest to Eileen Saner, esaner@ambs.edu, AMBS, 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart, IN 46517. Review of applications begins Dec. 7, 2009.

Eastern Mennonite Missions seeks ***part-time (50%) executive assistant to the president***. Required: two-plus years of administrative experience, mission commitment, computer and interpersonal skills. Apply by Nov. 25; begins Jan. 4, 2010. Contact Jeanette Hunt at jeanetteh@emm.org or 717-898-2251.

Calgary First Mennonite Church, located in central Calgary, invites applications for a ***full-time lead pastor*** position. Our congregation seeks an applicant with a commitment to Mennonite theology and to the practices of the Mennonite church. We seek a spiritual leader with gifts of preaching, teaching and pastoral care. Related education and experience in pastoral leadership is a priority. Please direct resumés to our Pastor Search Committee contact, Marguerite Jack, at mjack@netkaster.ca.

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A missed flight

Gerald Shenk teaches at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va., and works with an Abrahamic initiative for faith-centered peacebuilders at Eastern Mennonite University.

It is rare to have a work of fiction link with real-time poignancy to real families in your vicinity. A recent main-stage theater production on our university campus brought back memories from 20 years ago with surprising force for our family and even more powerfully for another family nearby.

In December 1988, a plane crashed into the Scottish village of Lockerbie, killing all 259 people on board and another 11 on the ground. Pan Am flight 103 was headed from London to New York, and circumstances pointed strongly to suspicion of a terrorist attack with a bomb stowed among the luggage on board.

The family of one of the actual victims lives not far from Harrisonburg, Va., and lent some retrieved clothing fragments from their daughter/sister for display during the play at Eastern Mennonite University (written by Deborah Brevoort, directed by Heidi Winters Vogel). They joined the audience one evening and paid tribute to the power of its message.

The play revolves around the efforts of the local Lockerbie women who witnessed the crash and then sought permission to wash the bloodied, shredded clothing of the victims and return them to families in a gesture of remembrance.

Cast along lines of a classic Greek drama, the staged version achieves its power by a single-minded devotion to the idea that "hatred shall not have the last word in Lockerbie." By showing love to those who suffered, the women of Lockerbie seek a path beyond the tragedy with a healing gesture. Their hope is frustrated by logistic and bureaucratic nightmares, personified by an emissary of the U.S. diplomatic corps. Yet the women persist, and through their efforts a troubled American couple, torn by grief and despair after losing their son in the crash, find a measure of reconciliation and readiness to move on with their lives.

Watching the talented cast perform, I was moved more than I anticipated as our own college-aged daughter played the role of the traumatized, grieving mother. What is it like to lose a child, even one who is grown and mostly gone from home? How does one seek resolution when the remains are nowhere to be found and the case against the probable perpetrators is drawn out and endlessly inconclusive?

The terrors of our world afford so little shelter, such shabby securities behind the layers of protective measures that encroach incessantly on our liberties, offering empty assurances that life as usual can go on.

We rarely know how close we come to the disasters that strike our world numb. But any mention of Lockerbie brings back a flood of memories for me as well. Our family was also traveling from Europe to New York that day in December 1988. In fact, we were hoping to return in time for family Christmas celebrations in Pennsylvania. Yet we somehow ended up stuck in the Belgrade airport delayed for 10 hours of engine repairs.

I tried everything I knew to get us from the Yugoslav airlines onto another flight instead. For most of those 10 hours, I coaxed and cajoled, argued and begged. I spent all my available energy trying to convince the ground crew that we needed to make the switch and meet our ride in New York. "Just get us to Frankfurt or London, and I'll pay the extra charge to get on Pan Am," I pleaded. Four days before Christmas, I didn't want to get stranded in Belgrade, with two small boys, a babe in arms and the dashed hopes of a whole family with reunions on our horizon.

Dad is supposed to be able to fix almost anything. Coping with setbacks, striving against adversity and dealing with cross-cultural complexities is part of the job. On occasion, when I manage to muddle through a difficult challenge, someone in the family circle remembers with approving tones the fine example of "Fantastic Mr. Fox" from one of our favorite Roald Dahl books.

That December day would have remained etched as one of the least fantastic displays of my powers of persuasion. I have rarely felt so confounded, so stymied despite all my best efforts. Ten hours of trying to get my family of five onto a flight with Pan Am brought no success. And then, those clock-stopping words right after we finally made it to New York on our original Yugoslav Air flight: "Did you hear what happened with Pan Am today?"

I have never forgotten the flood of grief and relief, the sheer gratitude to recognize the mercy of not getting what I had wanted so ardently that day. My attempts at persuasion have been tempered ever since with the awareness that my knowledge is incomplete. Ten hours of frustration melted in a moment. I cannot fathom the immense loss for the real families that suffered in that devastating attack, but I can almost imagine losing my own. With Job we are humbled and confounded in confessing: The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. TM

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You Never Gave Me a Name: One Mennonite Woman's Story by Katie Funk Wiebe (Dreamseeker Books and Herald Press, 2009, $15.95) is a memoir of a woman left widowed with young children who becomes a writer and an early Mennonite and biblical feminist.

Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church by Gerald J. Mast and J. Denny Weaver (Cascadia Publishing House and Herald Press, 2009, $12.95) offers a fresh model for understanding Anabaptism, past and present, that is applicable to Christians hungry for practices shaped within the story and life of Jesus Christ.

Like Those Who Dream: Sermons for Salford Mennonite Church and Beyond by James C. Longacre (Cascadia Publishing House and Herald Press, 2009, $18.95) draws readers into the meaning, joy and culture-subverting power of the faith.

The Mill Grinds Fine: Collected Poems by Helen Alderfer (Dreamseeker Books and Herald Press, 2009, $12.95) presents vignettes from the life of one of the earliest Mennonite women writers.

A Generation of Vigilance: The Lives and Work of Johannes and Tina Harder by T.D. Regehr (CMU Press, 2009, $29.50) tells the story of a couple who led the Yarrow (B.C.) Mennonite Brethren Church from 1930 to 1948.

Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation by James K.A. Smith (BakerAcademic, 2009, $21.99) is the first of a three-volume work on the theology of culture. This book focuses education around the themes of liturgy, formation and desire.

The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens by Graham Ward (BakerAcademic, 2009, $24.99) examines the political side of postmodernism in order to discern the contemporary context of the church and describe the characteristics of a faithful, political discipleship.

God Hides in Plain Sight: How to See the Sacred in a Chaotic World by Dean Nelson (Brazos Press, 2009, $15.99) presents a story-driven introduction to sacramental living that helps Christians see the presence of God amid the chaos and monotony of everyday life.

I Told Me So: Self-Deception and the Christian Life by Greg A. Ten Elshof (Eerdmans, 2009, $15) reintroduces readers to self-deception and offers an explanation for its recent neglect in Christian thought. It describes conditions that tempt us to deceive ourselves and points out where they exist in contemporary Christian life.

Jesus Matters: Good News for the 21st Century, edited by James R, Krabill and David W. Shenk (Herald Press, 2009, $16.99), includes essays in which each author teams with one or more young adults to consider the various ways we encounter and experience Jesus. (See excerpt on page 14.)

The Star of Bethlehem (DVD, 2009, $12.95) highlights evidence that the celestial event trumpeting the birth of Christ was an actual occurrence as described in the nine clues given in the Gospel of Matthew. It is available at www.thestarofbethlehemmovie.com and www. Seizoom.com.

Lay Saints (DVD, 2009, $5.95) is a film about Christian Peacemaker Teams work at the outbreak of the Iraq War in 2003. It documents the circumstances of the CPT delegation, which arrived in Baghdad after the bombing had started. It's available from www.indieflix.com/films/laysaints.

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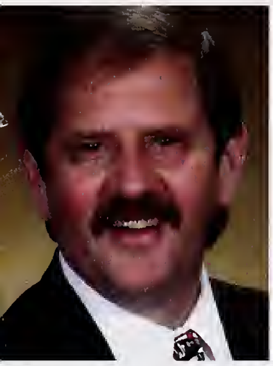

Everett J. Thomas

About the moratorium

We received many thoughtful and sensitive letters in response to the question: Should *The Mennonite* lift its moratorium on articles and letters that address Mennonite Church USA's teaching position on sexuality? (See "The Dangers of Dialogue," Sept. 15.) Because of these responses, we are under some obligation to report our current thinking on the matter.

The letters—some for publication and some not—provided broad context for our board of directors' meeting on Sept. 27. As a result, we decided to search for a way to be helpful to the church as it wrestles with the conflict surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity issues. At our board's request, I am developing a proposal for a number of article ideas and will ask Executive Leadership whether such a plan would be helpful. The articles include some or all of the following:

- Review of the important Mennonite Church USA documents that establish our denomination's teaching position on sexuality.
- A feature article on a pastor or a congregation that ministers according to these documents with the most generous interpretation possible.
- A story of a congregation that resolved a deep conflict and the resources they used to do so.

Since 2000, we have had a moratorium on letters and articles that address our church's teaching position on sexuality.

- An article highlighting the different ways we read the Bible.
- An article on how the church can pray about the issue.
- A feature story on a person with same-sex orientation who remains faithful to the church's teachings on celibacy.

Why not just publish these things without checking with others? Because, in their deliberations last summer, Mennonite Church USA delegates asked the Executive Board to work with area conferences to develop resources for the conflict. The delegates did not ask *The Mennonite* to do this; we do not want to pre-empt the work being done among conference leaders (see page 22).

Most of these ideas were suggested by board members during our discussion. I've added the last one, however, because it is an issue that is seldom addressed. I also noticed that the broader Evangelical community is now beginning to take a more nuanced look at the question of sexual orientation and faithfulness.

In the October issue of *Christianity Today*, Bobby Ross Jr. reports on a resolution adopted by the 150,000-member American Psychological Association (ASA) governing council. According to Ross, the resolution acknowledges that "some clients may be distressed due to a conflict between their sexual orientation and religious beliefs."

Ross also points out that this concession by the ASA "exposed a divide in the evangelical therapy community." The divide is over reparative therapy—treatment to change orientation as is done by Exodus International—and sexual identity therapy. Ross quotes a Christian counselor who describes this kind of therapy as helping clients "sort out their beliefs and work out an identity and life that fits within the client's beliefs."

I do not recall ever reading an article written by a Mennonite with same-sex orientation who shared how he or she remains faithful to the church's teachings. But I know some committed sisters and brothers in the church who have done so and continue to be faithful. Perhaps these people can provide the most helpful resources. I can imagine that they have thought and prayed about their situations far more than have the rest of us.

Area conference leaders are now being asked by Executive Board to identify the resources they need for addressing the conflict. Congregations and leaders that wish to get involved can best do so by contacting their area conference leaders who are developing responses.

What emerges from this effort may frame the discussion for the next several years. We expect to be a partner in that discernment and will open our pages to discussion of the issue within the framework being established.—*ejt*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

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Companions

Isaac Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship.

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

No one expected me to get back in time for our worship service. But I left the Mennonite Church USA convention in Columbus, Ohio, early enough Sunday morning to arrive in Chapel Hill, N.C., a few minutes after our 5 p.m. service began. I slipped into the sanctuary and found an inconspicuous seat in a back pew next to Eric, Rebecca and their 6-month-old baby, Grace.

God feels different from the back pew. I experienced a lot more wiggly and noisy life. Some parents sit in the back few rows so they can get up and walk around with their babies. I heard Grace squeak with joy at the most ordinary parts of the service. And I saw her chubby legs and arms stretch and swing this way and that. The Holy Spirit must have enlivened her little body. Grace seemed to dance in the arms of her mother and father—and in the middle of our worship service. And I wanted to dance, too.

I remembered one of the convention's worship services, at which I'd scribbled a few lines from pastor Megan Ramer's meditation: "The Holy Spirit longs for my companionship," she said. "This Spirit waits with us and for us, drawing us again and again." That's exactly how I felt when I watched Grace. I saw the invitation of the Spirit to enjoy God's presence; I felt the longing of God drawing me again and again into companionship. Grace's ecstatic little body showed me that worship is where, as Ramer said, "I am being sought by a Spirit who longs for me." And when the Spirit flows through us, we "create a home with the Spirit, we make a dwelling place together." The Spirit draws us into worship where we find our home with God.

As I watched Grace I could feel myself resting into my home after a weeklong trip full of busy meetings. These people are my home; they are how the Spirit offers me companionship with God.

Worship that evening choreographed our bodies into a dance with the Holy Spirit. We were like Grace's wiggly, noisy little body. We sat and stood, sang and prayed, listened and talked, and all that movement was how the Spirit drew us into companionship. Mary Jo led us in hymns that blended our voices. Laura's prayer opened our minds to God as we let our thoughts flow through one another. And Dave's sermon broke into my tired heart and invited me to share in his weaknesses with tears; my vision turned misty when his voice cracked and trembled. We were companions.

My whole week at the convention came together on my drive home from church that evening. Maybe it had to do with how exhausted I was, or with finally having time alone to process the week of joy and sadness and possibility. In a moment everything converged, and I found myself with blurry eyes. But this was par for the course during my week in Columbus. When a friend asked me about my church, the best I came up with was to say that my people are ordinary yet infinitely interesting. And I had to stop talking because I noticed my eyes began to water. Love is strange.

Pastor Ramer is right: The Spirit draws us again and again into companionship. God's grace is an invitation to get mixed up with a bunch of ordinary people and realize you love them—and to come to know this love as what God feels like. To borrow from Sebastian Moore's *God Is a New Language*, I always look forward to coming home when all the mysteries of God are revealed in the clasp of my sister and brother's hands.

And all this is the gospel—to feel my way into God, welcome Christ's companionship into loneliness and let the Spirit overwhelm me with the goodness of eternal life.

TheMennonite

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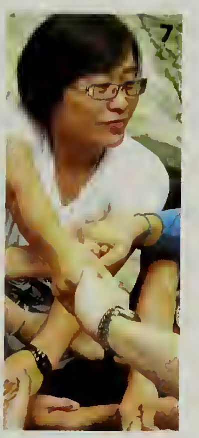

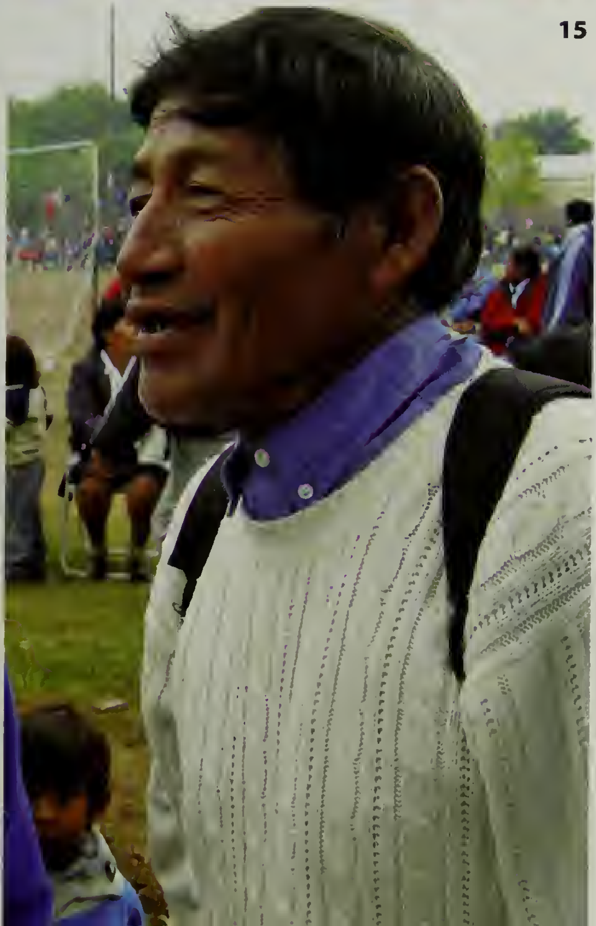

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Cover: Keneilwe Mokube, Kgomotso Swabi and Mpha Mbambo at the Bopaganang Basha Ba Semoya youth center in Francistown, Botswana. Photo by Ryan Miller

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Response to Jennifer

You should have taken the rez road, sister,
Up through Leupp and Dilcon,
The Painted Desert, barren, yes!
It might sand blast you on a windy day,
Or throw you a full 180-degree rainbow
Late Sunday afternoon,
Driving beneath that glorious arch,
Sky anything but blank,
rolling psalms,
yeah prophet warnings,
And somewhere between Upper and Lower Greasewood,
Cresting the breast of a dry hill,
You would see a cow, maybe two,
A herd, in fact,
Munching sustenance from coarse roadside vegetation,
Not milk she gives, but meat …
tolerant.
I hit one once, a thud to shake the soul.
No damage done!
She plunged thunderously into the dark desert.
While I, trembling,
journeyed on
Pondering the impact
Of Gospel Tract.
—Mary Ann Halteman Conrad, Flagstaff and Ft. Defiance, Ariz.

Editor's note: This poem is a response to the Oct. 6 poem "Highway 40, New Mexico" by Jennifer Halteman Schrock. The two women are sisters.

What to do about human trafficking

I read Anna Groff's Oct. 6 editorial ("Sex Trafficking Happens Around Us") about human trafficking. I think trafficking, especially of minors, is the worst thing that's going on in the world today. Is there anything that an 87-year-old woman with a computer can do to stop it? If a trafficker kills me for trying to ruin his business, I'll just consider it a summons from God.—*Dorothea Kewley, Des Moines, Wash.*

The Mennonite's moratorium

Regarding the moratorium on letters and articles addressing Mennonite Church USA's teaching position on sexuality: If not in *The Mennonite*, then what? The longstanding dilemma is how and where to publically have opposing issue dialogue within a denomination that strives for a homogeneity that does not exist. The recent comments on whether or not to lift the moratorium on a particular issue accentuates the issue. If *The Mennonite* serves as the official publication of the denomination—and by inference the official promulgator of official positions—then where is the appropriate place to have alternative positions presented and argued? If it is not *The Mennonite*, then such voices will be driven underground and marginalized, and therefore dialogue will be eliminated.

When *The Mennonite* was a publication of the General Conference Mennonite Church, it was a vehicle where lively and challenging positions were shared and apparently not seen as a threat to the denomination. My perception is that this has now changed. We need a publication of and for the membership of Mennonite Church USA and not necessarily of and for the "denominational structure of Mennonite Church USA." The interests are not necessarily the same. Since our conferences have lost the ability to promote genuine dialogue, it becomes increasingly more important for us to have a vehicle that promotes family discussions, differences and community building, not moratoriums.—*Ron Hunsicker, Lititz, Pa.*

Provide profiles showing diversity

The Mennonite could help lead the way in the discussion over sexuality by running a series of profiles that reflect the reality of diversity within and among our congregations on this issue. Profiles could be of those who feel they are firmly situated where they are in their approach to the issue—wherever that may be—as well as people who are unsure what to think. Profiles could be of pastors, congregations and members who have prayed, studied and thought hard about how the church relates to gay and lesbian people. Profiles could focus on people's experiences and relationships, their understanding of Scripture and their particular setting.—*Joel Miller, Cincinnati, Ohio*

IN THIS ISSUE

November is Missions Month, and we are grateful for the three features provided by Mennonite Mission Network. In "Questions and Elders" (page 8), Moriah Hurst reflects on a pendulum swing: Early generations of young adults had older adults give them direction in life. Now "elders are scared to speak into the lives of young people." Melanie Quinn (page 12) describes the difficult forgiveness process she and her friends had to follow after trusted elders betrayed the center where she works in Botswana. Willis Horst reflects on what it means to leave his co-workers after 38 years in the Argentine Chaco (page 15). There are also stories of other mission activity. Don Yost (page 22) describes the innovative way a Goshen, Ind., health clinic provides care for impoverished people. We end with an editorial that asks all of us to be thankful for each other this Thanksgiving.—*Editor*

Mennonite Youth Fellowships' beginnings
Regarding "Learning from the Past, A History of Mennonite Youth Fellowship, 1948-1968" by Jonny Gerig Meyer, Oct. 6: To suggest that youth organizations like Young Life (1941) and Youth for Christ (1944) convinced (old) Mennonite Church (MC) leaders of the need for a youth program is not accurate. Needed was a way to integrate programs and activities provided by the church so that youth with youth, youth with leaders, congregations with congregations, and church boards with youth concerns were united in a well-rounded, Christ-centered program.

A step in this direction was taken in 1937, when the MC General Conference formed the Mennonite Commission for Christian Education and Young People's Work. The commission brought together the Young People's Bible Meeting Committee (1909), the General Sunday School Committee (1915), the Young People's Problems Committee (1921) and the Young People's Institute Committee. The commission was composed of 12 members along with a variety of secretaries. In 1943, the secretary of Young People's Activities was established, with Paul Erb the first secretary.

General Conference met in special session in Souderton, Pa., in 1946 to deal with pressing issues following World War II. I attended those sessions. One evening dealt with the need for a service program for youth. A committee of the Peace Problems Committee reported a study of Mennonite service work. It included guiding principles for a service program or a youth fellowship. Nelson Kauffman, field secretary of the commission, brought a stirring message for a youth program that emphasized service. A consensus emerged that the commission should initiate planning, organizing and promoting a Mennonite Youth Fellowship.

In the August 1947 session of General Conference, John R. Mumaw, chair of the commission, reported goals for the next biennium. One was "to organize a Mennonite Youth Fellowship to enlist the youth of the church for service and loyal devotion to the truth." He listed the reason and activities of the fellowship. He wrote, "The youth of our church are in need of greater ties of fellowship and more significant service to make their church membership meaningful." The three areas of activity should include (1) faith and practice, (2) fellowship, (3) extension. The commission report encouraged forming local congregational units, district conference organizations and a churchwide organization. The plan would also provide a channel for churchwide boards to serve and communicate with youth. General Conference approved the plan for a Mennonite Youth Fellowship.

The commission appointed a committee of young people to work with Paul Erb in planning along with staff people from the mission board responsible for service units. Since my MRE thesis, "A Plan for a Mennonite Youth Fellowship," was written in the 1946-1947 school year at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, I was asked to write the first Mennonite Fellowship Manual.

Plans for MYF climaxed with the first churchwide MYF meeting at Mackinaw Dells, Eureka, Ill., June 1948. It was held in connection with the annual meeting of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities.

The first MYF officers were elected at that meeting: Gerald Studer, Orrville, Ohio, president; Richard Detweiler, Souderton, Pa., vice president; Edgar Metzler, Scottdale, Pa., treasurer; and Ada Schrock, Salisbury, Pa., secretary. Three secretaries were appointed: Myron Ebersole, Sterling, Ill., faith and practice; Fred Erb, Waterloo, Ont., extension; and Ray Horst, Ephrata, Pa., fellowship.—*Paul Lederach, Lansdale, Pa.*

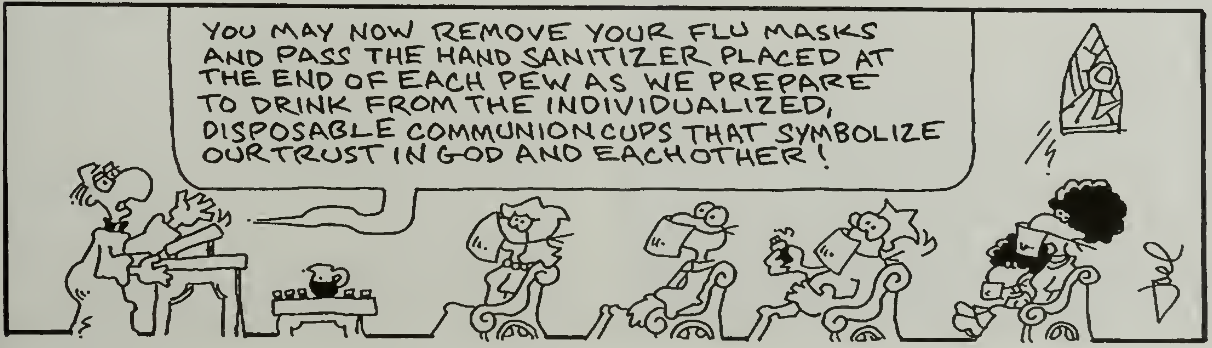
ONLINE POLL RESULTS

My congregation's mission budget is: (47 votes)

○ remaining the same (47%)
○ declining (23%)
○ increasing (21%)
○ not sure (9%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


YOU MAY NOW REMOVE YOUR FLU MASKS AND PASS THE HAND SANITIZER PLACED AT THE END OF EACH PEW AS WE PREPARE TO DRINK FROM THE INDIVIDUALIZED, DISPOSABLE COMMUNION CUPS THAT SYMBOLIZE OUR TRUST IN GOD AND EACH OTHER!

IN BRIEF

Fertility numbers

The fertility rate of half the world is now 2.1 or less—the magic number that is consistent with a stable population and is usually called "the replacement rate of fertility." Sometime between 2020 and 2050, the world's fertility rate will fall below the global replacement rate.—*The Economist*

Amish fail to report abuse

Four Amish leaders in southwest Missouri who chose to "shun" an accused child molester in their community rather than report him to authorities were charged Nov. 3 with failing to report the sexual abuse. —*The Elkhart Truth*

Honoring the difference

In considering the hostile language toward "the Jews" found in John's Gospel, Jewish scholar Adele Reinhartz poses some challenging questions to Christians: "Can we be so bold as to reject some aspects of our Scriptures as 'ungodly'? Is the valuing of a sacred Scripture an all-or-nothing proposition? Do we read [Scriptures] in ways that serve only to accentuate the gulf between ourselves and others, or do we find ways to read them so as to honor rather than despair of the differences among us?" —*Christian Century*

Blough named in list of top Protestants

Neal Blough

ELKHART, Ind.—Neal Blough, a long-term worker with Mennonite Mission Network, was recently named one of the 100 most influential Protestants in France by *La Vie*, a Catholic weekly magazine. Blough and Janie, his wife, have been working in France for 34 years. Blough teaches at Vaux-Sur-Seine Evangelical Seminary, the Mennonite theology school in Bienenberg, Switzerland, and the Catholic University of Paris. Neal and Janie also serve on staff at Paris Mennonite Center. The Oct. 22 issue of *La Vie* commemorated the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth and the influence of Protestantism in France. Part of that influence includes Anabaptists.

"Mennonites [in France] have a history as long as that of the Reformed and Lutherans, which is not the case for other Free Church Protestant traditions," says Blough. "In the words of the magazine article, they represent a 'small but essential minority.' "—*Mennonite Mission Network*

David Zwier

EARTH
350
THE PEOPLE
350

Goshen students sort recyclables from trash

On Oct. 24, Goshen (Ind.) College students and community members participated in 350.org's International Day of Climate Change by walking to and gathering at the Elkhart County Courthouse in Goshen. They also collected the college's trash for three days, separated out the recyclables (about a fourth of it) and then formed the rest into the shape of 350.—*Goshen College*

MCC increases Asia disasters appeal

AKRON, Pa.—In response to the needs of flooding and earthquake survivors in Asia, Mennonite Central Committee is increasing its appeal for donations to $250,000. The additional contributions will allow MCC and its partners to respond to extensive flooding damage in southern India and Cambodia and provide permanent housing for people in Indonesia, where earthquakes devastated entire villages. Already included in the initial appeal, launched on Oct. 2, is relief for flooding in the Philippines and Vietnam, caused by September's Typhoon Ketsana. Short-term relief and temporary housing for Indonesian earthquake survivors were also included in the initial amount. MCC is also contributing $480,000 from its account at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, raising MCC's total relief effort to $730,000.—*MCC*

New worship council holds first meeting

WATERLOO, Ont. and SCOTTDALE, Pa.—What songs should be included in a new hymnal for the Mennonite church? What new resources could be provided for worship leaders? Those were two of the questions raised at the inaugural meeting of the Mennonite Binational Worship Council, which met Oct. 4-6 at the St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church. Council members dreamed about new resources that could be offered to song and worship leaders, such as holding more song- and worship-leading events in area conferences, conversations with Anabaptist musicians and composers who work primarily in the contemporary praise and worship genre, and ways to include input about worship from racial-ethnic churches. The new Worship Council is sponsored by Mennonite Publishing Network and was created following a denominational hymnal consultation organized by MPN in April 2008.—*MPN*

Bluffton baseball team receives NCAA award

BLUFFTON, Ohio—The National Collegiate Athletic Association honors committee has named the 2007 Bluffton (Ohio) University baseball team a recipient of the 2010 Award of Inspiration. In March 2007 a charter bus carrying 30 of 42 student-athletes and three coaches of the team to their season opener in Florida fell off an overpass onto Interstate 75 in Atlanta, killing five student-athletes and the driver and his wife. All survivors of the team are making positive contributions to their communities, providing examples of courage and determination and exemplifying what it means to be an NCAA student-athlete. They will be recognized in January at the NCAA Convention in Atlanta.—*Bluffton University*

Rod Suderman.

ens discuss prejudices at northeast Asia peace camp

ens living in China, Japan and Korea participate in the first rtheast Asia peace camp sponsored by Mennonite Central mmittee, which brought teens together to address griev- ces and prejudices held by people of their countries.—*MCC*

Bethel announces new interim vice president

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—Bethel College interim President John Sheriff has announced the appointment of Allen R. Wedel, Newton, as the college's new interim vice president for business affairs, beginning Nov. 2. Wedel's term as interim vice president will coincide with that of Sheriff's term or be extended, as determined by the incoming president. Wedel was most recently general accounting manager for AGCO Corporation in Hesston, Kan.

Allen R. Wedel

"In that role, he developed annual departmental budgets, worked closely with human resources and provided strategic direction for IT projects," says Sheriff. "In light of our current situation, it was imperative that we find someone with the right skills to begin working alongside administration immediately. Allen brings the expertise in the field and the appreciation for Bethel's role in the lives of today's youth needed to make an immediate impact." Wedel replaces Laurie Tietjen, who resigned this past spring, and Gregg Dick in the interim.—*Bethel College*

MMA, Mennonite Financial open new offices

GOSHEN, Ind.—Mennonite Mutual Aid and Mennonite Financial Federal Credit Union recently celebrated the opening of two new offices in which they will share space. The Goshen, Ind., office is located near several neighborhoods with heavy concentrations of members, including Goshen College and Greencroft Communities. The Harrisonburg, Va., office is located in the newly opened Common Good Marketplace, a retail center of organizations that share common values. Each location welcomed the community during open house celebrations and collected donations for food pantries.—*MMA*

TourMagination celebrates 40 years

WATERLOO, Ont.—TourMagination is celebrating 40 years. In 1970, a group of Mennonites toured sites in Europe in an attempt to retrieve the original Mennonite vision and to have fellowship with Mennonites in these places. Jan Gleysteen and Arnold Cressman organized the tour. Soon the tours became a regular event, allowing people to blend their faith with an opportunity to see the world. Gleysteen and Cressman called their fledgling Mennonite tour company, TourMagination. By 1976, TourMagination alumni were asking the company to lead tours to other parts of the world, while Mennonite World Conference and mission boards were seeking ways to help Mennonites visit other Mennonites around the world. —*TourMagination*

Wilderness Wind retreat for artisans

ELY, Minn.—On Oct. 1-4, Wilderness Wind, near Ely, hosted its first annual Creator's Retreat for quilters, knitters, scrapbookers and more. No one suspected that Congolese fabrics would influence the event or that it would connect people from many different states, says Kathy Landis, camp director. Lois Kennel, who sewed clothing from different styles of Congolese fabric, offered the pieces to Marlys Wiens, MCC Relief Sale quilt liaison for North America. Consequently, Marlys brought an unfinished wall-hanging to the retreat. In Pennsylvania, Karen Alderfer offered some of her fabric to her daughter, Heidi Feikert, in Kansas. Heidi, in turn, pieced a top that she donated to the retreat for people to work on and auction at a future MCC relief sale. The wall-hanging and some quilts that were worked on will be auctioned at the Rocky Mountain, Idaho and Minnesota MCC relief sales. For information about next year's retreat visit www.wildernesswind.org. —*Wilderness Wind*

—compiled by Anna Groff

IN BRIEF

Guth recognized by Autism Society

Christine Guth of Goshen, Ind., has been selected for the 2009 Excellence in Family Support award by the Autism Society of Indiana. For the last three years, Guth has been a volunteer Program Associate with the Anabaptist Disabilities Network, giving special attention to autism spectrum disorders mental illness and resources for congregations.—*Autism Society of Indiana*

C. Henry Smith winner announced

Laura Cattell, a 2009 graduate of Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., won the C. Henry Smith Oratorical Contest with a speech titled "Structural Violence in the U.S. Educational System." The text of Cattell's speech can be read at us.mcc.org/programs/peaceeducation. The contest is administered by the Peace and Justice Ministries of Mennonite Central Committee U.S.—*MCC*

350-year-old book is bestseller

Martyrs Mirror, remains one of the most popular books from Herald Press, the book division of Mennonite Publishing Network. The book is almost 350 years old and was published in Holland by Thieleman J. van Braght. MPN has sold over 72,000 copies.—*MPN*

Questions and wise elders

by Moriah Hurst

Picture this: a bunch of college students crammed into a dorm room after a Mennonite history class. The topic of conversation: calling and the purpose or direction of our lives. Our class that evening had looked at stories of past elders and leaders in the church. Some of these leaders had told young people what to do with their lives. At least one advisor at our Mennonite college went beyond telling people what classes to take and gave them directives on their major, their career path, where they should serve and even whom they should marry.

From where we sat in our dorm room, my friends and I were glad that we no longer had such controlling leaders. But as the conversation went on, we named something more—we mourned the fact that no one gave us strong advice on what to do with our lives. We liked not being forced into a path and being able to chose for ourselves what we would do, but we knew that we needed help making those decisions.

Young adults and the church in Australia

The pendulum has swung the other way, and elders are scared to speak into the lives of young people.

There we were, a bunch of 20-somethings with the world open to us, and we had no idea which passions we should follow or how to sort it all out. We looked at each other and realized we were willing to give our lives, we just didn't know what to give them to.

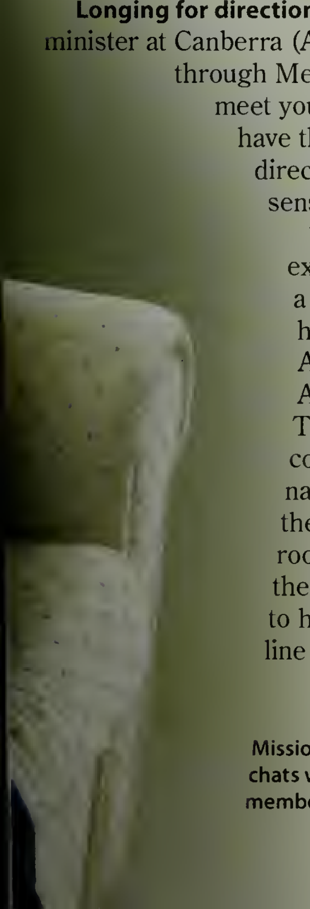
The pendulum has swung the other way, and elders are scared to speak into the lives of young people.

My friend John summed it up well: "If someone walked in here today and said, 'I see these gifts and skills in you and I think you should go and use them in this place and in this way,' then I would go."

With relief and longing, we all agreed with John. If someone could help us name our gifts and guide us in a certain direction, we would be willing to drop everything and follow that call, even to the other side of the world.

Longing for direction: In my work today as a minister at Canberra (Australia) Baptist Church through Mennonite Mission Network, I meet young adults every day who have this kind of longing for direction often embedded in a sense of dislocation.

Take my friend Tamara, for example. Tamara worked for a couple of years in the health system of an Aboriginal community in Australia's Northern Territory. As we talked over coffee one day, Tamara named how she longed for the kind of belonging and roots that she saw in places there. Tamara wanted to fit in, to have her place within a long line of people and belong to something with meaning far beyond herself.



Mission Network worker Moriah Hurst chats with Radical Journey team member Shae Miller.

Tamara, like many young adults I meet, is amazed that I will work within a religious institution and still ask questions of it. Many of her friends are seeking a spiritual connection, she said, but experimenting with other faiths has left them confused and not willing to commit to anything. I have seen that trend within my friendship groups—young adults leave religious groups or churches to try to be authentic to what they believe, which they don't see the church holding to or living out. Tamara and her husband want to be connected to something spiritual but can't really agree to the doctrine of a church, so they have made their way to the grounded silence of the Quakers.

Many of the parents of our generation grew up learning absolute truths. Whether they embraced those truths or rejected them, many of these parents have not taught or passed them on to their children—my generation. In an attempt to give their children freedom of choice, they have removed a foundation of spiritual or moral understanding. Many young adults, even from churched families, are largely biblically illiterate and are suffering disconnection, not by their own choices alone but from the religious reaction or rejection of their parents. This only adds to the myriad of other choices piled upon us today.

Young adults leave religious groups or churches to try to be authentic to what they believe, which they don't see the church holding to or living out.

We have the freedom to choose in more ways than we can imagine. All these choices become paralyzing. As we parted, Tamara asked me if my church had a mentoring program that helped young adults sort through all these questions and the barrage of choices. I sadly confessed that we don't.

As I watched Tamara ride away, my mind flashed back to a conversation I'd had over coffee with my friend Gareth just a few weeks earlier. Gareth grew up as a Christian and went to a seminary for a year after college yet has many questions about faith and how we live it out. For now,

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he is also meeting with Quakers for worship.

Over our steaming cups we grappled with faith and our Western context. We both have many questions, and the church doesn't seem ready or willing to hear them.

How do we find worship that is indigenous instead of just a transplant? How is the church a place of welcome instead of being a hollow ritual? How do we empower people toward countercultural faith instead of moralistic norms? Who is this God we are called to introduce people to? Our conversation went round and round.

How is the church a place of welcome instead of being a hollow ritual? How do we empower people toward countercultural faith instead of moralistic norms?

Gareth ended up with the Quakers because they share his values of good food, good conversation and active lives of social justice, and when they gather for worship, "they expect that God, in the Spirit, will show up," he said. How often do churches hold these things together: the doing or acting out of faith in daily lives and entering worship ready to be profoundly touched by a movement of the Spirit?

Wisdom in mentoring: In Australia's post-Christendom context, it is thoroughly uncool that I work for the church. Yet I have learned to love the conversations that start as people hear that I work for the church yet believe that God is big enough for our questions. I love opening a space for them to ask the whats and whys of my faith tradition. I don't push, but I do pray, and we keep talking.

Inevitably I get, "How can you work for a church when you still have questions?"

I explain: I come from a tradition that works though community discernment. I prayed with others, heard a clear call to the work I am doing, and discerned that calling with a community of people willing to name my strengths and challenge me on my weaknesses. I know I am called to work with Canberra Baptist Church, to start Irene's Place—a house where young adults from Canberra and around the world can explore discipleship and peace—and to host four young women in Australia through Mennonite Mission Network's Radical Journey program, because my community helped me listen. I live with these young women so we can work together at integrating spiritual practices into our daily lives. We are held within a larger faith community, but by living together we have daily accountability in our faith. We will spend these 10 months together looking at how the faith of our parents becomes our own.

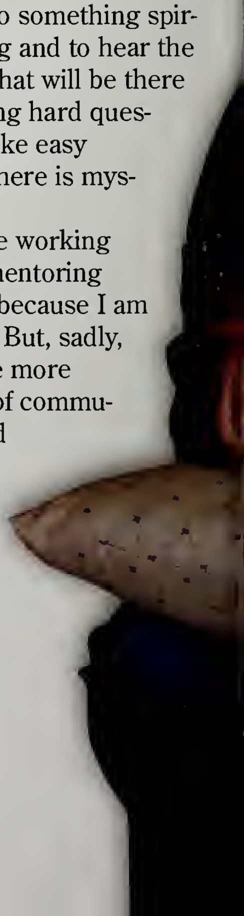
My work comes from my longing to help other young adults find a place to discern their faith and their calling.

At a recent conference of the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand, my table group of young adults expressed gratitude to meet members of an older generation living out their faith.

One person said, "We need wise elders," to hear the stories of those who have gone before. We need to know what it was like, to seek the wisdom of our elders and for these elders to grapple with us over how to live out faith now.

Young adults want accountability. They want community and to be connected to something spiritual and real. They want to belong and to hear the story that goes before them and that will be there after them. Young adults are asking hard questions, and while they will rarely take easy answers, they acknowledge that there is mystery in life and in God.

There are communities that are working well intergenerationally and are mentoring young adults in faith. I know this because I am the product of such a community. But, sadly, they are few and far between. The more young adults are burned by lack of community, by missing accountability and mentoring, by not seeing spiritual life and the actions of faith lived out together, by floundering around without wise elders to help them call out gifts and move them to action, the more



Mission Network worker Moriah Hurst chats with Radical Journey participants Ashley Milburn and Rebecca Epp in Canberra, Australia.

they will shy away from religious institutions.

They are longing for what church could be but don't see it as what church is.

Picture this: More than half the people in that dorm room I mentioned earlier followed the prompting of an older member of their church to go into service. Several of the people yearning for direction have ended up in Colombia with Christian Peacemaker Teams, even when it meant putting school and other relationships on hold. I ended up going halfway around the world for work I had told people I flat-out could not do.

Yet my friends and I were listening when our wise elders said: "I see these gifts in you. Go there."

And we went.

Moriah Hurst specializes in youth and young adult ministry for Canberra Baptist Church and as the community coordinator for Irene's Place, a house of discipleship, service and peace. She is supported by Mennonite Mission Network and congregations in Central District, Indiana-Michigan, Lancaster and Mountain States Mennonite conferences. A young adult herself, Hurst confesses that these are only a few out of a range of pressing issues when it comes to understanding young adults and their relationship to the church. As the youngest child of mission workers Mark and Mary Hurst, she grew up in Australia.

Young adults want accountability. They want community and to be connected to something spiritual and real.

Provider God

Young people in Botswana learn about faith and forgiveness.

by Melanie Quinn

Sitting on the veranda of Bopaganang Basha Ba Semoya youth center in Francistown, Botswana, on a July afternoon, we casually talked about the huge African sky. Observing the pearl gray and sepia clouds, I once again told the youth around me how much I love the vastness of space here.

We were waiting, as usual.

That day was different, though. While passersby may have thought we were idle, we were far from being still.

These young folks are heavily involved in peer counseling and education through community events and dramas they themselves organize, write and act out. They consider their messages and how their words and actions might influence others their age. Through drama and song, they tear away the shroud of silence that permits alcoholism, domestic violence and AIDS to ravage their society.

They teach others about how God wants people to respond to suffering, while they learn more about the role God plays in their own lives.

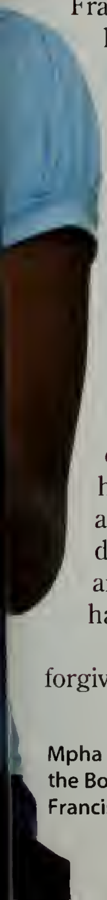
These young adults strive to put on a cohesive, thought-provoking performance and they do it as a community.

My job as a mission worker here in Francistown is to serve as a kind of mentor, looking over documents and helping with all activities, allowing these young adults to learn to lead. In practice, I have become a kind of mother, caring for them in times of trouble.

These past few months we had been embroiled in a traumatic scenario that, though not the fault of anyone at Bopaganang Basha, resulted in the suspension of our center's funding for nearly nine months.

When this began, I had been in Botswana for a year. I had two choices: back out during this stormy period or dig in and help clean up the mess. I decided to dig in and help. Together with a makeshift team, we determined to go on with the peer education and counseling these youth were working so hard to provide.

This was a tough time for all. We needed to forgive the offenders in order to move forward.



Mpha Mbambo, Kgomotso Swabi and Keneilwe Mokube at the Bopaganang Basha Ba Semoya youth center in Francistown, Botswana. Photo by Ryan Miller

Mogomotsi Oarabile and Boikhutsu Robert at the Bopaganang Basha Ba Semoya youth center in Francistown. Photo by Ryan Miller

I will confess to quite a bit of frustration and even anger at this situation. These kids had put a great deal of trust into people who let them down.

And, may I add, they are so talented.

I watch the dynamics of their theater group. These young adults strive to put on a cohesive, thought-provoking performance and they do it as a community. Because of the importance of these issues, egos have no real place in their rehearsals. Some sing, some dance, and some are writers. All are considered vital to the production.

They do have differences. But they will stop what they are doing, sit together and try to work on it. Their understanding is evident; they know their differences will be reflected to their audience, distracting from their teaching. We are still having Bible study at least three days a week, but they want it to be every day. They acknowledge nothing can be accomplished without God.

Forgiveness is a powerful action; we must engage it often for it to be valid.

One young actor, Keneilwe Mokobe calls God by the Hebrew name, Jehovah Jirah, which means "The Lord, our provider." Mokobe gives voice to many of her peers when she says, "We must trust in God every day and in every situation."

But trust is difficult when there is no food.

The missing grant money provided the young adults with a small stipend for food and bus fare to the center for daily rehearsals and Bible studies.

Still, the youth continued with God's work—even though some of them walk an hour to get to

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the center, even though they may have nothing to eat when they get home. Many of their neighbors support the Bopaganang ministry with the resources they have—an extra blanket against winter's cold wind or a hot cup of tea.

The first Bible study after our funding dilemma came to light was hard—really hard. After all, how dare I suggest we all work on forgiveness? And was I ready to show the example?

Forgiveness is a powerful action; we must engage it often for it to be valid. I must change my action, my behavior. I cannot bring up the anger just to vent. Rather, I must forgive totally so we can gather ourselves and move on. I prayed for the strength to let go of my anger and frustration.

We brought in new administration to handle our office. We are committed to moving on and rebuilding. I ask my young brothers and sisters, Have you forgiven yet? Are you able to let go and give it to God?

With hard faces, many of them did not answer. The ones who did just told me, "Mommy*, you will know."

Our group never stopped giving. They determined to carry on with their ministry and their message, whether or not they received.

In one Bible study, we read all of 1 Kings 17—the story of the widow of Zarephath feeding Elijah with the last of her flour and oil, before God provides unlimited sustenance, and the prophet then resurrects her son.

In Francistown, the idea of the boy's resurrection from death is no more surprising than the miraculous feeding. The group seems to understand that God has no limits—all feats are equal to the one who provides for the world.

But how, the youths asked, could the poor widow disrespect Elijah when her son fell ill and was left without breath, after God had kept her and her son fed for such a long time? Peter Monyatsiwa said we must always praise God, no matter what, as God always is with us. God knows our needs, as God knew the widow's needs, and all must know and respect the nature of God. When we do not question the purposes of the one who provides, God will continue to bless us. Mogomotsi Oarabile said we must pray to God with truth and faith, understanding that God knows our needs.

A visitor named Julia, took the story a step further. How many times, she asked, do we turn down giving because we fear poverty or we fear that we will be unable to do without whatever we might give? All of us, she noted, are guilty of this in some ways.

Our group never stopped giving. They determined to carry on with their ministry and their message, whether or not they received. Only in the last months were we able to get the funding returned and our equipment restored. But the restoration did not end with our equipment.

Sometimes after particularly hard days, the Bopaganang group gathered outside the center to pray, to pour out our anger to God.

Then, one day, comfort.

After loading the truck with our stage props, we gathered. We prayed for the day, for safety, for love, for friendship. As I looked around at their faces, I felt a great comfort. Suddenly the young women lifted their voices in song. I watched them open their eyes—their smiles were like the sun emerging from a cloud.

As they left, I got hugs. With laughter, one young man approached me, full of Christ's forgiveness and ready to share that grace with others.

"We are not angry anymore," he assured me. "We are free."

* In southern Africa, "Mommy" is a title of intimate respect.

Melanie Quinn, is a worker with Mennonite Mission Network in Francistown, Botswana, supported by Atlantic Coast, Eastern District, Franconia, Illinois and Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference congregations. Bopaganang Basha Ba Semoya (Youth Center of the Holy Spirit) began in the mid-1980s with youth from African Initiated Churches in Francistown and Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission workers. Mission Network, AIMM and Mennonite Church Canada Witness collaborate with churches of Botswana in ministry.

Watch video and hear songs from Bopaganang Basha Ba Semoya in the Mission Sunday materials available online at www.MennoniteMission.net/Resources.

Leaving the Argentine Chaco is no easy matter for two Mennonite mission workers.

I once sat with the late Marcos Esteban, a Toba elder in the Argentine Chaco, and talked through the leaving of another fraternal worker.

"We have been tied together with a ribbon of friendship, of fraternal bonds," Marcos said. "We are brothers. Our lives are intertwined. One cannot simply cut the ribbon and throw the shorter end away."

How, Marcos wondered, can someone depart to live out their lives, leaving him with only the memories from a long-term relationship?

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Will we throw the ribbon away?

by Willis Horst

Willis and Byrdalene Horst and Abelino Santo (Mocoví)

Mission Network p

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In our highly mobile society we come and go, friendships are picked up and dropped quickly. We find it impossible to maintain relationships with more than a few close friends and family and depend on printed words and electronic technology to do even that.

For people steeped in oral cultures, the reality seems different. One's web of relationships is extensive. While travel and communications media is less accessible, memory is more vivid. Physical encounters may be scarce, but distance is bridged more readily in a mythical worldview. They tell us that paradise, for them, is tranquility surrounded by family.

To leave and never come back, one must find an acceptable rationale.

This year, we left the Chaco after 38 years as part of a Mennonite team of workers from across the world, whose purpose in Argentina is solely to walk alongside indigenous Toba, Mocoví and Pilagá believers.

Indigenous church leaders in the Chaco have feared that the mission workers would abandon them once the foreigners were no longer in charge.

With our indigenous sisters and brothers, we began talking about leaving well ahead of time and listened to expressions of their feelings and thoughts. Remembering shared experiences as well as God's work in their lives and ours over the years was an important aspect of this process.

While we talked about our impending leaving, one Toba pastor said, "I don't like it when people often say, 'If we don't see each other again here on earth, we will see each other when we meet in heaven.' I would much rather say, 'Let us be in touch with each other through our prayers.'"

Since we arrived in the Chaco in 1971, it seems we have been called upon repeatedly to explain why it is necessary to maintain a missionary presence there. "After all," some observed, "the indigenous church is, as you have told us, functioning well in a culturally appropriate way. They are on their own. Why should we stay? There are many places in the world where our church's money is needed to meet more urgent needs."

Since Mennonites began accompanying believers in the Chaco in the 1950s, one of the constant questions has been that of continuity. Why should a missionary presence be maintained? And what should we do?

Early in our ministry, Albert Buckwalter, who served with Lois, his wife, in the Chaco for more than 40 years, told me a story.

"When we announced we were no longer intending to be in charge of the Toba church," he said, "the questions that inevitably surfaced were, Are you leaving us, then? Will you also now abandon us?"

"Only when we assured them we intended to continue to stay beside them did they feel the freedom to take full charge of their own church life."

At the time, there was no model to understand this new church-to-church relationship. No one had heard of expatriate mission workers ceding control of the indigenous church to their own leaders, with no paternalistic intent to get the new churches into the denominational fold.

The term "fraternal worker," which replaced "missionary" as a designation of Mennonite workers in the 1950s, has been fruitful. On the one hand, it describes clearly the more appropriate relationship between expatriate worker and local indigenous church leaders. (Albert once described the relationship in a *Gospel Herald* article, "Brothers, Not Lords.")

At the same time, it freed the indigenous church to designate its own "missionaries," thus dignifying their own church. Recently, we have used the term "missionary-as-guest" in a further attempt at clarification.

We expatriates must not rob the indigenous leaders of both the privilege and the responsibility of being fully in charge. Will we, then, after being in long-term relationship with them, cheat them out of participating in the decision about whether we stay or leave?

In our world, the pattern of the missionary who established, defined and guided the young church is well entrenched. Indigenous church leaders in the Chaco have feared that the mission workers would abandon them once the foreigners were no longer in charge.

Those fears persisted until it became evident the Mennonites did not intend to leave.

As we leave, we go with similar fears. If no workers come to join the Mennonite team in the near future, it will mean an almost total eclipse of accompaniment of the Pilagá churches. In recent years, earnest but culturally insensitive workers have arrived from other outside groups who enter to evangelize with a conquering spirit. The void of a fraternal presence in those churches will likely be filled more and more by evangelical groups with theological emphases that discourage genuine indigenous expression.

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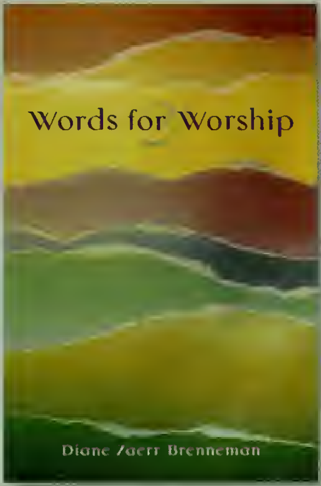
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Diane Zaerr Brenneman

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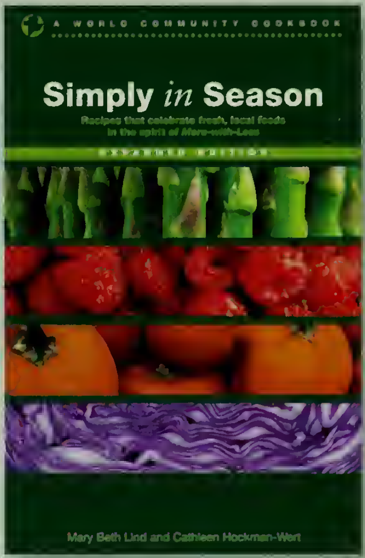
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Shane Claiborne

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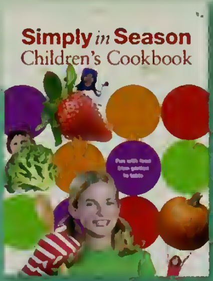
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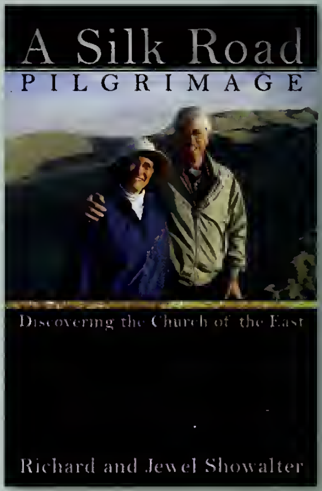
A Silk Road
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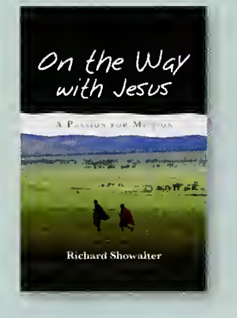
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Ingrid Hess

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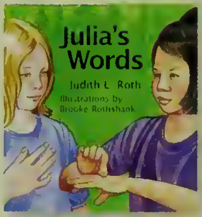
Julia's Words
Judith L. Roth
Illustrations by Brooke Rothshank

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Cups Held Out
Judith L. Roth

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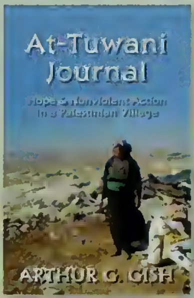
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What's the goal of worship? It should unify, transform and call Christians to lives of integrity, discipleship and mission says John D. Roth, professor of history at Goshen College. In this book he examines the traditions of Anabaptist-Mennonite worship such as baptism, communion, foot washing, and common meals, and shows how they not only transform us as believers, but extend our witness to the world.
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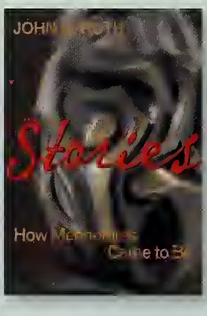
JOHN D. ROTH
Beliefs
Mennonite
Faith and Practice



JOHN D. ROTH
Practices
Mennonite Worship
and Witness

Sharing a Gospel of Hope

The world is a challenging place today. Economic uncertainty, unemployment, pandemic, conflict, poverty, hunger, injustice—these are just a few of the issues that confront us.

Fortunately, there's hope! As followers of Jesus, we know that the daily litany of distressing news is not the final answer—God is still the author, creator and giver of life. As Christians we are called to be God's witnesses, bringing grace, joy, peace, healing and hope to the world.

The mission of Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN) is to equip the church to share this gospel of hope. Our goal is to help you live out the radical message of Jesus Christ, and to proclaim that the historic Anabaptist vision of peace, justice, worship, discipleship and service offers real and practical solutions for the challenges facing the world today.

At MPN, we are privileged to be part of sharing this gospel of hope. We believe that the Anabaptist vision is as relevant today as it was over 450 years ago. I hope you will find something that helps you live more faithfully as you seek to serve and follow Jesus!

Ron Rempel

Ron Rempel, Executive Director

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That expression is vital for the health of the indigenous churches, and unusual among evangelized indigenous communities. There must be some kind of continuity in our face-to-face interaction, even if it isn't constant. Otherwise, the memory is broken. Interchurch solidarity falls into oblivion.

When the Buckwalters simply could not continue visiting the indigenous communities due to health concerns, they struggled with the commitment not to abandon the indigenous believers. Was that the Buckwalters' personal commitment or was it made on behalf of the particular part of the body of Christ relating to the Chaco indigenous believers?

Surely Albert did not anticipate a perpetual North American presence among the Argentine indigenous churches.

Or did he?

We understand eternal life as a new quality of life, an unending participation in a new peoplehood in which we care for each other. Such is the church of Jesus Christ. We and the indigenous believers with whom we have established a spiritual relationship have become part of one body. There is a real sense in which that unity cannot be broken.

What is our ongoing responsibility to unity?

In the Chaco we have often pondered the meaning of the following widely spread quote from an Australian aboriginal activist group, as voiced by Lilla Watson: "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

The question raised by this piece of wisdom has to do with our Western individualism versus an indigenous interconnectedness. It is an invitation to embrace the future with recognition of the basic unity of all that is.

That we might really need the contributions of those who have been left out until now seems too far out for our Western worldview to grasp. Can we really believe, in any substantial sense, that our future is bound up with that of others to whom we relate, especially if they are on the margins of human history? Or do we continue on our way believing we can relate to others when and how we choose?

Westerners have the power (read: economic domination) to decide if and when we initiate or terminate a relationship with those perceived to be weaker than us. This is similar to the way our consumer culture has taught us to discard anything that is no longer of service to us.

Jesus' way of reading the narrative of his own people highlighted the value of the rejected ones. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone of God's historical project. God's project is to redefine the meaning of the "survival of the fittest." In Jesus, the definition of who the fittest for survival are is reversed. The weak, the compassionate and the poor are God's choice in building for the future survival of creation.

Adán Medina, Willis Horst, zonal pastor Sáenz Peña and Felipe Verun

Mission Network photo

Can we really believe that our future is bound up with that of others to whom we relate, especially if they are on the margins of human history?

In light of the above, we as a church, as Mennonite Mission Network, seek to empower the marginal of the earth to live the Jesus way. We ought to do all we can to remain close to those who are God's predilection for the future, in order that we not be left ignorant and with our liberation less than complete.

Willis Horst, with Byrdalene, his wife, served since 1971 with Mennonite Mission Network as part of the Mennonite team of six families walking alongside indigenous Toba, Pilagá and Mocoví Christians in the Argentine Chaco.

Mennonite Mission Network is looking for pastoral accompaniment workers to join the Mennonite team working with indigenous Toba, Pilagá and Mocoví churches in the Argentine Chaco. This is a relational ministry with a preference for workers with a strong personal commitment to sharing Christ and who are open to considering long-term, intercultural mission work.

Celebration, repentance, accompaniment

Stanley W. Green is executive director of Mennonite Mission Network.

2010 is now just weeks away. The year will include the FIFA World Cup, the world's largest sporting spectacle, June 11-July 11, 2010, in South Africa, and the XXI Olympic Winter Games Feb. 12-28, 2010, in Vancouver, British Columbia. 2010 will also be a big year for much of the church. It will be 100 years since the historic World Missionary Conference, an ecumenical missions conference held in Edinburgh, Scotland. Three other global conferences will also be held in 2010, in Tokyo, Japan; Cape Town, South Africa; and Boston.

Noted Christian author George Weigel notes: "There were only 558 million Christians in the world in 1900, and there will be approximately 2 billion Christians by the middle of the year [2002], a huge increase." The phenomenal growth of the Christian movement has been accompanied by the global spread of the church. According to Philip Jenkins, over the past century the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted southward to Africa, Asia and Latin America. These are the regions where the largest and fastest-growing Christian communities on the planet are found. Jenkins predicts that by 2050, only about one-fifth of the world's 3 billion Christians will be non-Hispanic whites. While Western Christianity may be in decline, a new era of Southern Christianity is dawning. The face of mission has changed. About half of all cross-cultural missionaries today are non-Western. Korea has become the second-largest sender of foreign missionaries.

To accompany others in mission is to listen, discern and share with our companions what the good news of Jesus means in their context.

There will, indeed, be much to celebrate when church and mission representatives gather in the four 2010 gatherings to commemorate Edinburgh 1910. Another note appropriate with our praises is repentance. At the 1910 gathering were 1,215 delegates. Only 17 participants were from Asia. There were no African delegates.

Even more disconcerting than the lack of southern participants, however, was the way people from the South were regarded by conference participants. Wardlaw Thompson, missionary to Africa, referred in a speech at the conference to the primitive or barbarous peoples, where the missionary is admittedly one of a "superior" race and should see the docility of the "inferior" race as at once the missionary's opportunity and peril.

William Jennings Bryan of the United States, a guest and speaker at the conference, spoke of Christianity's character being revealed in its willingness to run the risk of educating the "inferior people of the world." Such sentiments, often repeated at the conference, led to the objectification of the peoples of the South and to grave atrocities, including the denigration of whole cultures. Hopefully there will be a place for repentance.

Might we also wish for a commitment to revisiting our approaches in mission. From imposition and objectification of the "targets" of our mission, perhaps we can also imagine new ways of being in mission. Beginning around the midpoint of last century, Mennonites took seriously the need to reflect the example of Christ in their encounter with people of other cultures. That approach can best be described as accompaniment and is reflected in the stories in this issue of Melanie Quinn, Moriah Hurst, and Willis and Byrdalene Horst each of whom, whether in Botswana, the Argentine Chaco or Australia, have been modeling a different way of being in mission. The dictionary defines accompaniment thus: Noun: (i) One who shares interests or activities with another: comrade, fellow, mate. Informal buddy, pal; (ii) One that accompanies another; (iii) One of a matched pair of things: counterpart. Verb: To be with or go with (another): accompany, attend, escort. Idioms: go hand in hand with.

The etymology of the word comes from the French "com" (with) and "panis" (bread). Thus, one who shares the same bread. To accompany others in mission is to listen, discern and share with our companions what the good news of Jesus means in their context and find ways to empower them for their response to God's call. Mennonite Mission Network has been attempting to find ourselves and encourage Mennonite Church USA congregations on this journey toward a new way.

In 2010, as brothers and sisters meet across the globe, we pray we will find many others on this journey to a new way of being in mission. Certainly celebration, hopefully repentance, but also we pray for a reconceptualization that will restore the life-giving, dignity-conferring and liberating dynamics of mission for the century just begun.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Holy wars and holy peace**—David Kreider
- **How to read the Bible**—Marion Deckert

Lutherans express regret for persecution

World Federation statement addresses the way Anabaptists were treated.

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has taken another critical step toward reconciliation with Anabaptists.

At its October meeting near Geneva, Switzerland, the council unanimously recommended that the LWF 11th Assembly adopt the statement "Action on the Legacy of Lutheran Persecution of 'Anabaptists'" when it meets in Stuttgart, Germany, in July 2010.

The statement expresses "deep regret and sorrow" for the 16th-century violent persecution of Anabaptists by Lutherans. It asks for forgiveness from God and from Mennonites for past wrongs done to them, for having forgotten or ignored this persecution and for continuing to describe Anabaptists in damaging ways.

The statement also speaks to how Lutherans will remember this persecution and how the Lutheran confessional legacy will be interpreted in the future.

This action comes in response to the work of the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission, established in 2002. The joint commission's report, based on its work from 2005 to 2009, and the LWF council's action will be sent to Lutheran churches for discussion and response before the 2010 assembly.

Larry Miller, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) general secretary, a guest at the Geneva event, welcomed the action "in a spirit of celebration and prayer."

He brought greetings from the 15th MWC assembly in July, when 6,200 Anabaptists from around the world gathered in Asunción, Paraguay. Ishmael Noko, LWF general secretary, and Kathryn L. Johnson, assistant general secretary for ecumenical affairs, brought news of the expected move toward reconciliation to the Paraguay assembly. (See Aug. 18 issue, page 10.)

Miller told the Lutheran council that the message Noko delivered was "one of the most sacred moments of that assembly."

Lutherans are not the first Christian world communion to address the execution and persecution of Anabaptists by Christian authorities, noted Miller.

"But the honesty, carefulness and compassion with which you are doing so seems to touch the Mennonite heart in a way I have not previously seen," he said.

"The air was electric with anticipation," said Ronald J. Mathies, who went on to describe "the drama that was unfolding on the stage at Assembly 15." Mathies is interim president of Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., and a former executive director of Mennonite Central Committee.

H. Putsman Penet

The Lutheran World Federation Council approves the statement "Action on the Legacy of Lutheran Persecution of Anabaptists."

"Pray that further significant steps toward reconciliation will take place," he said.

Rainer Burkart from Germany said he felt thankful "that God has brought together … two churches that have resulted from the turmoils of the European Reformation."

Burkart is cochair of the International Study Commission and a member of both the MWC Executive Committee and the MWC Faith and Life Commission. He sees two main differences between Lutheran and Anabaptist faith and practice: baptism and matters concerning church and state relations, including the use of force for humanitarian purposes. These two issues will be on future agenda for MWC's Faith and Life Commission, he said.

Burkart served as secretary in the conversation between the Lutheran and Mennonite churches in Germany from 1989 to 1993. The German dialogue resulted in a declaration of mutual Eucharistic fellowship.

He said the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden, one of two MWC member churches in Germany, does not require rebaptism when Lutherans transfer to Mennonite congregations. Other dialogues have occurred in France and the United States.

MWC officers met in Ontario in early November to draw conclusions from the International Study Commission joint report and the decisions made by the LWF council.—*Ferne Burkhart of Mennonite World Conference*

Trip from Oregon to Kenya changes lives

African hut quilt brings in $6,000 to benefit Mennonite school in Mathare.

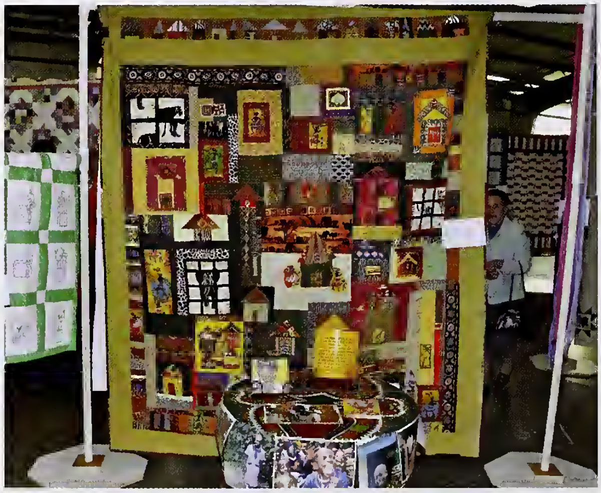
It's the exceptional quilt that sells for $6,000 at auction, and that's particularly true at the Oregon Mennonite Festival for World Relief. Only one other item in the event's 26-year history has equaled it.

That the winning bid came last month is all the more impressive, given the economic climate. But this was a remarkable quilt, with a remarkable story.

A member of Salem (Ore.) Mennonite Church, Julie Graber was born in Tanzania, where her parents were volunteers with Mennonite Central Committee's Teachers Abroad Program.

They returned to the United States when Julie was still a baby, but she always wanted to see the places that held so many memories for her parents. In January 2007, Julie, Burt, her husband, her 13-year-old daughter Lydia, and her father, Donald Hostetler, participated in a TourMagination trip to Kenya and Tanzania. They flew into Nairobi, where on the first day they visited a school in Mathare, an area of intense poverty.

Cathleen Hockman-Wert



The finished quilt at the Oregon Mennonite Festival for World Relief.

Lydia Graber

Students at the Mathare Menno Kids Academy greet visitors.

With support from MCC's Global Family program, Eastern Mennonite Missions and other agencies, the Mathare Menno Kids Academy offers an education to children from preschool through eighth grade. A program of the Mathare North Mennonite Church and staffed mostly by volunteers, the school has grown to 330 students.

An elementary school teacher, Julie was touched by the school's ministry. When Julie asked the principal, Enock Otieno, what the school needed most, she expected to hear a list of supplies. But a different answer came.

"When he said their main goal was to be able to feed the children lunch twice a week, as they had no breakfast at home and no lunch when they sent them home at noon, I was overwhelmed," she said. "When I left the school, reluctantly, I knew I had found a greater purpose in my life."

Since the trip, Julie has shared the story of the Mathare school with each fifth grade class she teaches in Dallas, Ore.

The kids are so taken by the story that every year they ask if they can help. Garage sales, bake sales, car washes and a large pancake breakfast and silent auction have been held to benefit the school, all initiated by students.

Now—about that quilt.

For the last several years Julie's friend Lisa Wipf has organized a craft weekend at the coast for a group of friends and family. Lisa has also spent time in Kenya, and this January, before the weekend, she sent each person a piece of fabric with an African animal theme. She requested that each make a quilt block of an African hut. There were no other directions.

Participants brought 15 beautiful blocks of all sizes to the weekend, and the group spent hours arranging them with other pieces of fabric to balance the colors. When they finished the quilt, Lisa offered it to benefit the Mathare school.

The quilt became the featured item of the Oct. 10 Oregon Mennonite Festival for World Relief, and it sold in a staccato burst of bids for $6,000. With tears in their eyes, Julie and Lisa met the purchasers, who had bought it for a family member who grew up in Kenya.

Ten days later, Julie received an email expressing jubilation from the Mathare school principal. The wonderful news had arrived at the right time, Enock said. The school and church have experienced hard times following the post-election violence, exacerbated by severe drought. Still, the school's success has led to its growth.—*Cathleen Hockman-Wert*

Peace movement leader returns to EMU

The work of Leymah Gbowee brought a peace accord in Liberia.

Her name is Leymah Gbowee, a 2007 graduate of Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in Harrisonburg, Va. Before coming to EMU, Gbowee emerged into the world spotlight when she and a brave group of ordinary women banded together to do the unimaginable—use nonviolent methods to confront Liberia's despotic president, Charles Taylor, and his warlord opponents.

Both sides used child soldiers, who terrorized the population, including raping a large percentage of Liberia's women and girls. The mothers dressed in white, held up handwritten signs saying, "We Want Peace," and appeared wherever they found the warring leaders. They also told the men in their families "no sex" until they do everything in their power to stop the war.

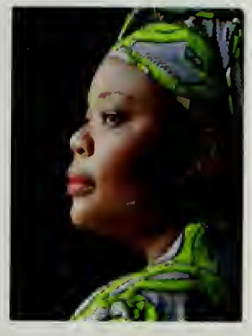
At one point the women linked arms and barricaded negotiators for the opposing sides in a conference room. Gbowee threatened to take off her clothes, followed by the other protesting women—an act that, in Liberian culture, would shame and disgrace the men—if the negotiators failed to stay at the table until they arrived at a peace agreement.

The women's efforts succeeded, and a peace accord was signed in the summer of 2003, leading to UN-supervised disarmament beginning in the winter of 2003-04 and finally to the election of Africa's first woman president in January 2006.

> I believe there are more good people than bad people in this world—it's just that we, the good people, refuse to step out.—Leymah Gbowee

On behalf of the women she led, Gbowee has received a half dozen major awards, including one from Harvard University. She has appeared on "Bill Moyers Journal" and "The Colbert Report" and is the main figure in a documentary, *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2008, where it won Best Documentary Feature. It is directed by Emmy-winning and Academy Award nominated filmmaker Gini Reticker and produced by Abigail Disney.

Liberia was founded as a colony in the 1820s as a place for freed slaves from the United States to emigrate to Africa. A military-led coup in 1980 overthrew then-president William R. Tolbert, launching a period of instability that eventually led to civil war.



Leymah Gbowee

Charles Taylor invaded the country in 1989. During his time in power, some 250,000 people were killed and over a million others displaced in a country of just over 3 million.

A formerly unknown social worker and mother of four, Gbowee organized hundreds of workers to call for peace. She attended EMU's Summer Peacebuilding Institute in 2004. She returned to SPI in 2006 and went on to earn a master's degree in conflict transformation from the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding the following year. She now heads Women Peace and Security Network Africa, offering training and counsel to women all over Africa, with special focus on security issues.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Liberian women's movement, she told the EMU audience, was "the way Christians and Muslims overlooked their differences and worked together to promote the need for peace."

"Before I came to CJP, I was a bit selfish—my entire world view was Liberia or West Africa," she said. "CJP put names and faces to conflicts in other parts of the world."

Gbowee shared more of her faith journey in university chapel on Oct. 23, retracing her steps from that of a homeless, unemployed, despairing person to a leader in her home and neighboring countries, one whom governmental and international leaders call on regularly for counsel.

"I haven't reached this place where I am today on my own," she said. "It is by the grace and mercy of God. I don't see how it's possible to be an effective peacebuilder in any setting without a strong faith."

Asked what sustains her in the midst of stressful, difficult work, Gbowee said, "I am basically an optimistic person. I believe there are more good people than bad people in this world—it's just that we, the good people, refuse to step out."—*Jim Bishop of Eastern Mennonite University*

Skills are worth 'more than money'

Maple City Health Care Center accepts vouchers from patients who volunteer.

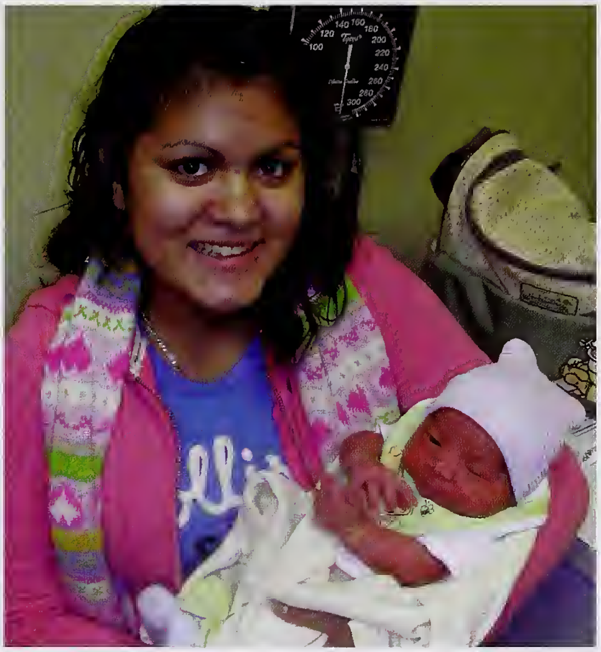


Photo provided

Stephanie uses More Than Money for Brandon's health care.

Maple City Health Care Center provides health care for residents in Elkhart County, Ind., by providing primary health care. But in November 2008, the board and staff of the center heard about families who had to choose between food and health care due to the high unemployment rate in the county. The news prompted the organization to rethink its strategy for providing affordable health care.

Maple City Health Care Center had previously relied primarily on sliding fees based on a family's income. At the largest discount, a typical office visit costs $7.60. With unemployment at 18 percent, the problem the center faced in October 2008 was that some families did not have $7.

Instead of focusing on the problem of people with no money, the center tried focusing on assets. The primary asset identified was time, because unemployed people have lots of time.

At first, staff thought about trying to match people who had time with people who needed help (a disabled couple needing snow removed from their driveway, for example). However, the staff didn't have time to collect needs and oversee connections.

But sister community organizations in Goshen had the assets that Maple City Health Care Center lacked. La Casa (neighborhood development), The Window (food bank), Maple City Market (food co-op), and Elkhart County Habitat for Humanity all used volunteers and already had training programs and supervisors in place.

The center worked out agreements with these organizations and designed a voucher for families who had no cash.

When family members volunteer at approved organizations, a representative of the organization signs a voucher that can then be used like cash to pay for health care at the center.

Because the family members help the center accomplish its mission of fostering a healthy community, the center credits their account $10 for every hour they volunteer. The program is called More Than Money, to demonstrate that people and their skills are worth more than money.

So far, more than 30 people have volunteered over 400 hours. Stephanie, a teenage mother, paid for her prenatal care by working as a receptionist at The Window.

Miguel (not his real name), an unemployed father of six children, worked at La Casa.

"I felt relief that I could pay for the doctor," Miguel says. Miguel's work had unexpected benefits. "When I worked for La Casa, I learned how to build walls and fix plaster."

Employees working at the front desk of Maple City Health Care Center noticed a big change in Miguel.

Prior to participating in More Than Money, Miguel slouched, looking like a beaten man. When he brought in his first 10 signed vouchers, Miguel held his head high.

See Maple City Health Care Center's Web site, www.mchcc.com, for more stories. The center was founded in 1989 by physician James Nelson Gingerich.—*Don Yost for Maple City Health Care Center*

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Mission Network worker shares kidney

Suffering from polycystic disease, Boss accepts donation from Weaver.

This year's holiday season will be especially joyful for Krissie Boss. She will be giving thanks for the gift of life from a friend. Betty Roth Weaver gave Krissie one of her kidneys on Nov. 4.

Both Boss and Weaver are administrative assistants in Mennonite Mission Network's Elkhart, Ind., office. Boss works in the human relations department. Weaver is health-care administrator and an assistant in the finance department.

"I asked her over and over again," Boss said on Oct. 27, "if this is something she wants to do. I am extremely humbled that Betty agreed to do this."

Boss has polycystic kidney disease, a problem that has been in her family for generations.

"My father had it and had a transplant," Boss said. "His sister had it. His mother probably had it. My brother has it and is getting ready for a transplant."

Boss learned 24 years ago that she has the disease, but her kidneys did not begin to fail until two years ago. For the past 18 months she has had to hook up to a machine every night rather than going to a dialysis center. For nine hours each night, the machine drew toxins out of her peritoneal cavity.

While waiting on the list for two years, another friend offered Boss a kidney. The donor was compatible but was rejected for health reasons.

"After her friend was rejected," Weaver said, "I asked Krissie for the phone number of the donor coordinator. I decided if I got turned down, I could accept that. I knew that if something happened to Krissie and I hadn't tried, it would be difficult to live with my conscience."

Both women have been active at Sunnyside Mennonite Church, Dunlap, Ind., for 30 years. They were MYF sponsors together and have served on many committees.

"Someone came to my desk at work one day," Weaver said, "and asked, 'Do people at Sunnyside know how sick Krissie is?' I made the phone call that afternoon."

Each woman has two young adult children. Weaver and her husband also have one grandchild.

"My son wanted to know if I'm going to act like Betty [after receiving her kidney]," Boss laughed.

Weaver says she had some worries beforehand.

"I thought, What if I get a kidney disease?" Weaver said. "Well, if I have a disease, it will affect both kidneys.

"Someone asked me why God gave us two kidneys. I said, 'So we can give one away.'"

On Oct. 28, staff members from the Mennonite Church USA offices gathered for an anointing service for both Betty and Krissie. "It was a tearful and joyful event," said Linda Krueger, human resources coordinator for Mission Network. "Betty reminded us of the time a few years ago when she was hospitalized with [pulmonary embolism] and was not expected to live. Now she is not only living, but is giving life away!"

Everett Thomas

Betty Roth Weaver (left) gave a kidney to Krissie Boss on Nov. 4.

The Sunnyside congregation also held a special prayer service for the women on Nov. 1 (see photo below).

The Nov. 4 operation was at the Indiana University Medical Center in Indianapolis. On Nov. 5, Weaver reported that the medical staff told her both kidneys were functioning well.

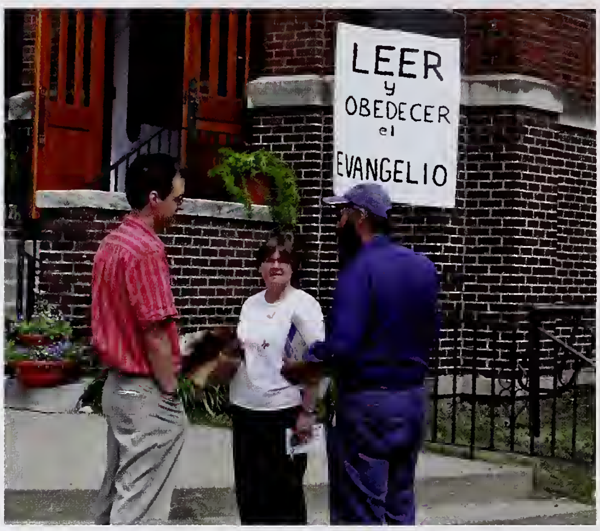
Weaver and Boss are now recuperating at home and expect to be back to work by the end of the year.—*Everett J. Thomas*

The Sunnyside Mennonite Church congregation prayed for Betty Weaver and Krissie Boss on Nov. 1.

Roger Weaver

Protester sparks look at safety practices

Faith Mennonite drafts guidelines after July ordination service experience.



Dan Leisen

From left, Michael Bischoff and Joan Wing of Faith Mennonite Church speak with a protestor outside the church before Joetta Schlabach's ordination service.

Faith Mennonite Church in Minneapolis has formed a task force of ushers and church leaders to draft safety guidelines. The reason: On July 12, a protester disrupted Joetta Schlabach's ordination service at Faith.

First the man carried a sign outside the church building with the words in English and Spanish, "Read and obey the gospel," says Ed Kauffman, Central Plains conference minister.

Several people engaged him in conversation and welcomed him to the service, according to Schlabach. He entered the church in the middle of the service. He shouted when he saw a woman, Mag Richer Smith, pastor of First Mennonite Church of Iowa City, Iowa, preaching.

"Women aren't supposed to speak in church. This is an abomination," he shouted from the back of the sanctuary, says Schlabach.

Ushers quickly and quietly asked him to leave.

"I stopped and waited as people in the congregation responded quickly and escorted the man out," Richer Smith says.

About five minutes later he reentered and asked to be seated. Once he took a seat in a pew, someone knelt next to him and quietly asked him not to be disruptive, says Schlabach. Ushers sat in front of him to be between him and the speakers.

The man kept quiet, except for a loud "no" when I asked for congregational support for Schlabach's ordination, Kauffman wrote in the October issue of the conference newsletter, *Scattered Seeds*. After the service, a number of people talked to the man and invited him to lunch, but he declined.

"To proceed as planned was powerful in light of the protester's presence—affirming the Spirit's leading in this whole event," says Richer Smith.

"While I don't advocate tight security in our churches," Kauffman wrote, "this incident did remind me that our congregations should think through what kind of response they would make if an intruder were to present him or herself."

"As we've had time to reflect on that occurrence," Schlabach says, "We realize that in some cases we may need to explicitly articulate that everyone is welcome but not all behaviors are welcomed or appropriate. We have broadened this conversation to include the general safety, particularly of children, within our building."

Faith Mennonite held an adult education session in September in which members discussed what they learned from the incident. The members affirmed the way individuals responded in a firm but loving way, Schlabach says.—*Anna Groff*

Dan Leisen

Ed Kauffman and Joetta Schlabach at Faith Mennonite Church.

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PA mission farm to grow food and faith

Living Hope Farm offers CSA shares, plans to develop ministries.

Rolling hills of silage corn on a century-old farmstead along southeastern Pennsylvania's historic Indian Creek are being transformed into a sustainably oriented market farm with a local ministry twist.

Jill Landes, a former teacher and now organic farmer, is the energy behind the new, farm-based ministry. Living Hope Farm started selling shares for its Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) marketing program on Oct. 3, with the first harvest expected in May 2010.

The nonprofit social enterprise model will enable various agriculture-related ministries to sprout from the farm.

"It's the ministry part of the farm that has our board dreaming," Landes says. As Living Hope Farm becomes established, the ministry may

- partner with urban congregations to increase access to fresh, local, reasonably priced produce;
- work with local ministries to train former inmates marketable job skills in commercial horticulture and food enterprises;
- offer community training about composting, garden planning and food canning;
- provide gardening and food experiences for children during summer camps.

Grace Nolt

Jill Landes, organic farmer, drives her John Deere tractor on Living Hope Farm.

The 40-acre property, owned by Franconia Mennonite Conference, was purchased in the 1950s. A rehabilitation ministry for alcoholics coming from New York City operated on the property, but was then converted into a ministry caring for adults with developmental disabilities. Fields have been rented to a neighboring dairy farmer.

In 2004 a local developer made an offer to purchase the farm to develop a residential subdivision. In response to the possible sale of the farm, members of Franconia Mennonite Conference began to consider a more active missional purpose for keeping the land. The decision was made to preserve the farm by selling the development rights, and to establish an agricultural-related ministry.—*Sheldon Good*

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Budgets: many churches making cuts

Mennonite Mutual Aid surveys churches regarding their financial state.

How are their congregations' budgets surviving this economic environment? Mennonite Mutual Aid (MMA) sent questionnaires to 200 pastors to ask about the state of their church finances and received 49 responses.

About half the 49 churches made cuts in staff, buildings, ministries or administration during 2008 and 2009. Congregations are adapting to difficult realities in a variety of ways, including

- reducing the operating budget for next year;
- cutting pastoral support from full-time to half-time and planning a staff reduction;
- reviewing philosophy of ministry, vision and connection to resources;
- placing building projects on hold;
- using any extra funds to reduce church debt;
- reducing staff use of Blackberry and cell phones;
- installing solar panels to provide electricity;
- making a contingency plan if the general fund falls to emergency levels;
- considering sale of the church building and other property;
- going to a variable budget with quarterly updates and revisions.

Yet, as many churches feel pinched, some also have ambitious building programs underway—two of them committed to finishing those programs debt free. Some churches said they are responding to current economic news by swimming upstream. They are

- exploring new ways to find funds and providing new opportunities for volunteers;
- committing to increase outreach funds;
- finishing a third building program in 20 years;
- committing to hold to previous commitments on churchwide and mission giving;
- starting a capital campaign for major building improvements.

MMA asked pastors if their churches had reserves or rainy-day funds available. Twenty-six of the 49 said they have such a fund, while one congregation is considering it. Twenty-eight of 49 churches said they have no debt, 13 are working diligently to reduce their debt load, and one is considering new repayment schedules.

MMA also asked pastors how they viewed fund-raising for special ministries—and whether they might use fund-raisers to fill gaps in the general congregational funds. Over half the responding pastors said they use fund-raising for special ministries, while 16 said they don't ever use fund-raising events. The remaining pastors said they are considering fund-raisers to finance unusual needs or special ministries. Meanwhile, four said they have used extra fund-raisers to fund their general funds.

Some church consultants say electronic giving options increase giving among parishioners, particularly young adults and those who don't attend church every Sunday. MMA also asked pastors if their churches were accepting funds via electronic giving. Only five of the 49 responding pastors said they were accepting funds electronically, and one was considering the idea.

In the end, while many churches respond in the financial heat with needed budget cuts, challenges are just as evident to build faith, strength and resiliency in parishioners. Here are some possible actions, taken from from elca.org, yourchurch.net and mennoniteusa.org for reducing expenses:

- Use electronic newsletters and cut mailing costs when possible.
- Freeze salaries for the year.
- Cut back on food purchased for church events.
- Employ extra watchfulness on giving trends
- Teach biblical stewardship as part of a newlywed class.
- Do a congregational skills audit to determine areas to be more volunteer-driven.
- Re-evaluate core values with wide congregational participation and determine if funding strategies match the core values.
- Give thanks for the blessings of continuing contributors and continue to minister faithfully.

—*from MMA's newsletter* Teleios

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WORKERS

Althouse, Dan, began a term as associate pastor of outreach and visitation at Marietta Community Chapel, Marietta, Pa., on Nov. 8.

Bowman, Mary Jo, was ordained on Oct. 25, at Harlan Mennonite Fellowship for her work as a chaplain.

Carson, Kelly, was installed as pastor at Mennonite Fellowship of Bloomington (Ind.), on Oct. 25.

Eshleman, Thomas L., began a term as lead pastor at Groffdale Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa., on Sept. 26.

Frey, Nancy, began pastorate at Mennonite Congregation of Boston, Cambridge, Mass., on Oct. 1.

Gerber, Lowell K., ended a term as lead pastor at Lititz Mennonite Church, Lititz, Pa., on Sept. 18.

Helmus, Linda, was licensed toward ordination and installed as Associate Pastor of Christian Education and Young Family Life at Neffsville Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Nov. 15.

Horning, Nevin S., began a term as lead pastor at Metzler Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa., on Sept. 20.

Martin, Rodney A., began a term as lead pastor at Lititz Mennonite Church, Lititz, Pa., on Sept. 18.

Miller, Eric, was ordained as associate pastor at South Hutchinson (Kan.) Mennonite Church on Sept. 13.

Nolt, Robert, was installed as intentional interim pastorate at Upper Milford Mennonite Church, Old Zionsville, Pa., on Oct. 25.

Ringenberg Miller, Rachel, was ordained for pastoral ministry at Portland Mennonite Church, Portland, Ore., on Oct. 18.

Schenk, Harold and Mary Grace, began interim co-pastorate at West Swamp Mennonite Church, Quakertown, Pa., on Oct. 1.

Schultz, Alma, ended a term as deaconess at Sunnyside Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on May 31.

Ward, Phyllis, was licensed for specific ministry as Pastor of Worship at Grace Mennonite Church, Lansdale, Pa., on Nov. 8.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Alderfer, Alessia Rose, Sept. 10, to Brent and Deirdre Alderfer, Philadelphia, Pa.

Alletag, Austin Philip, Sept. 24, to Anthony and Erin Swartley Alletag, Sellersville, Pa.

Belousek, William "Liam" Snyder, Aug. 28, to Darrin and Paula Snyder Belousek, Raleigh, N.C.

Byler, Jordyn Faith, Sept. 22, to Jeremy and Jody McKinsey Byler, Harrisonburg, Va.

Caron, Paisley Saige, Sept. 30, to Thomas and Sheena Scarbery Caron, Fresno, Calif.

Cupp, Emma Paige, Oct. 18, to Fred and Tara Williams Cupp, Harrisonburg, Va.

Gehman, Isaiah Ty, Oct. 20, to Grant and Emilie Horst Gehman, Ephrata, Pa.

Hilty, Noah Karson, Sept. 26, to Kirk and Jenee Winkler Hilty, Orrville, Ohio.

Lacher, Eli Gregory, Sept. 11, to Todd and Anna Piacentini Lacher, Syracuse, N.Y.

Liechty Sawatzky, Jesse Immanuel, Sept. 28, to Joseph and Anna Liechty Sawatzky, Mthatha, South Africa.

Roth, Cooper Dylan, Oct. 8, to Clint and Katie Burkett Roth, Iowa City, Iowa.

Smeltzer, Owen Davis, Oct. 1, to Corey and Jennifer Smeltzer, Wauseon, Ohio.

Vass, Alexander Thomas, Oct. 22, to Emmil and Sherri Allebach Vass, Sellersville, Pa.

MARRIAGES

Bales/Sprunger: Scott Bales, Durham, N.C., and Julia Sprunger, Raleigh, N.C., Oct. 10, at Stone Chapel, Wake Forest, N.C.

Burkhart/Saylor: Heidi Burkhart, Ephrata, Pa., and Ben Saylor, Ephrata, July 3, at Ephrata Mennonite Church.

Coppens/Gould: David Coppens, Indianapolis, Ind., and Wendy Gould, Middlebury, Ind., Oct. 17, at Shalom Mennonite Church, Indianapolis.

DeMaris/Krause: Brandon DeMaris, Lancaster, Pa., and Melody Krause, Ephrata, Pa., Sept. 5, in Philadelphia, Pa.

Fernau/Schrock: Joseph Fernau, Waterloo, Iowa, and Carmen Schrock, Kalona, Iowa, Oct. 24, at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona.

Hoover/Picking: Evan Hoover, Elkhart, Ind., and Lori Picking, Elkhart, Aug. 1, at Belmont Neighborhood Fellowship, Elkhart.

"For the Record" is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. To submit information, log on to www.TheMennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access our online forms. You can also submit information by email, fax or mail:

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New obituary policy

Beginning with the January 2010 issue of *The Mennonite*, additional information may be published in the obituary section. The following information will be free:

- Name of deceased
- Age at death
- Hometown and state
- Cause of death
- Name(s) of spouse(s)
- Name(s) of parent(s)
- Name(s) of child(ren)
- Number of grandchildren
- Number of great-grandchildren
- Number of great-great-grandchildren
- Location and date of funeral

Additional information may be added at the usual rate for classified ads. This is currently $1.30 per word. A photograph may be added for $25. To submit this additional information: download the Word document from www.themennonite.org, email obituaries@themennonite.org to receive an electronic copy of the form, or call 800-790-2498 to receive a copy in the mail.

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Johnson/Skeeters: Emily Johnson, Goshen, Ind., and Bryce Skeeters, Lexington, Ky., Sept. 12, at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Lee/King: David Lee, Lancaster, Pa., and Tara King, Lititz, Pa., July 25, at Ephrata Mennonite Church, Ephrata, Pa.

Leichty/Nafziger: Will Leichty, Wellman, Iowa, and Kate Nafziger, Goshen, Ind., Sept. 26, at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Miller/Pinkerton: Caleb Miller, Middlebury, Ind., and Megan Pinkerton, Wichita, Kan., Oct. 18, at Hope Mennonite Church, Wichita.

Mumma/Sensenig: Dave Mumma, Ephrata, Pa., and Alison Sensenig, Stevens, Pa., Oct. 17, at Ephrata Mennonite Church.

Nelson/Rottinghaus: Rustin Nelson, Wayland, Iowa, and Elizabeth Rottinghaus, Charles City, Iowa, Oct. 3, at St. Francis of Assisi Church, West Des Moines, Iowa.

Pickerill/Williams: Toby Pickerill, Milford, Neb., and Abby Williams, Milford, Oct. 10, at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

New from Cascadia Publishing House LLC

Theology As If Jesus Matters: An Introduction to Christianity's Main Convictions, Ted Grimsrud, which *Keith Graber Miller* sees as providing "an expansive, accessible, provocative, practical, and practice-able theology." 232 p; $19.95

A School on the Prairie: A Centennial History of Hesston College, 1909-2009, John E. Sharp, which brims, says *John L. Ruth*, "with personalities, landscape, dreams, and issues." 504 p; $29.95

Ask Third Way Café: 50 Common and Quirky Questions About Mennonites, Jody Nisly Hertzler. "A fine example of the new and welcome spirit of engagement among contemporary Anabaptists." —*Ched Myers*. 84 p $9.95

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DEATHS

Brucks, Elva Susan Lehrman, 92, American Falls, Idaho, died Oct. 24. Spouse: Emanuel "Monk" Brucks (deceased). Parents: Henry H. and Theresa Wiebe Lehrman. Children: Richard, Raymond, Diane; seven grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 31 at First Mennonite Church, Aberdeen, Idaho.

Diener, Esther Swartzentruber, 86, Archbold, Ohio, died Oct. 17. Spouse: Edward Diener. Parents: Laban and Nanna Bender Swartzentruber. Children: Larry, David, Diane Omondi, Margaret Diener; nine grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; three step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 20 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Eberly, Kathleen "Kathy" S. Nussbaum, 42, Hershey, Pa., died Nov. 1. Spouse: Chad Eberly. Parents: Donfred and Frances Nussbaum. Children: Kobi John, McKenzie Rae Eberly. Funeral: Nov. 5 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

Goering, Milton Merl, 86, Moundridge, Kan., died Oct. 15. Spouse: Darlene Frey Sawatzky Goering. Parents: Jacob P. and Asta Wedel Goering. Children: Susan, David, Dean, Mark, Steve; seven grandchildren; three step-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 18 at First Mennonite Church, McPherson, Kan.

Groff, Margaret G. Horst, 73, Ephrata, Pa., died Oct. 22 of cancer. Spouse: Paul S. Groff. Parents: Samuel M. and Judith Ellen Good Horst. Children: Paul Eugene, Karen Louise Beyer, Brenda Joy Hedrick; three grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 24 at Ephrata Mennonite Church.

Landis, Erma Jean Keim, 88, Sterling, Ill., died Oct. 23. Spouse: Howard William Landis (deceased). Parents: Noah and Mary Immel Keim. Children: Beth Landis, Lois Oyer, Mark, Keith; nine grandchildren; four step-grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; three step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 28 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling.

Miller, Leona Evelyn Roth, 84, Wellman, Iowa, died Oct. 29. Spouse: Daniel E. Miller (deceased). Parents: William and Emma Stutzman Roth. Children: Rachel Quist, Mary Lou Gingerich, Lyle; nine grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 1 at Wellman Mennonite Church.

Moyer, Anna LaRue, 80, Souderton, Pa., died Oct. 27. Parents: Joseph and Mabel Groover Moyer. Funeral: Oct. 31 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Pope, George Edward, 47, Springs, Pa., died Oct. 26. Spouse: Tracy G. Brownlee Pope. Parents: Eugene and Doris Weimer Pope. Child: Joshua. Funeral: Oct. 31 at Springs Mennonite Church.

Renno, L. Mildred "Mid" Hartzler, 100, Belleville, Pa., died Oct. 21. Spouse: Jesse L. Renno (deceased). Parents: John Y. and Fannie Kauffman Hartzler. Memorial Service: Oct. 23 at Valley View Haven Chapel, Belleville.

Ritter, Elsie Kathryn Witmer, 88, Harrisonburg, Va., died Oct. 22. Parents: Aaron and Maria Elizabeth Kuhns Witmer. Children: Brenda Rexrode, Clayton Eugene, Sandra Lucas, James Allen; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 25 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Schmitt, Dorothy Stover, 81, Souderton, Pa., died Sept. 8. Spouse: Abraham Schmitt (deceased). Parents: Abram and Laura Lapp Stover. Children: Mary Lou Gallucci, Ruth Ann Heilemann, David, Lois Hallock; five grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 12 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Wagler, Anna R. Roggie, 101, Lowville, N.Y., died Oct. 24. Spouse: Jacob Wagler (deceased). Parents: Andrew and Anna Widrick Roggie. Children: Edward, Lois Zehr, Carol Erb, Mary Ellen Good, Glenn Andrew; 16 grandchildren; 38 great-grandchildren; six great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 29 at Lowville Mennonite Church.

Yoder, Amanda Miller, 86, Millersburg, Ind., died Oct. 4 of cancer. Spouse: Alvin Yoder. Parents: Jacob and Joanna Helmuth Miller. Children: Brenda Hochstetler, Shirley Mast, Doris Schwartz, Carol Miller, Larry, Ray; 14 grandchildren; 10 step-grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; 20 step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 8 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Yoder, Clayton L., 84, Sun City, Ariz., died Sept. 28. Spouse: Pauline Chupp Yoder. Parents: Ray and Clara Yoder. Children: Gary, Steve, Pam Watson, Beth Yoder; four grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 3 at Sunnyslope Mennonite Church, Phoenix, Ariz.

Yoder, Salome Naomi Bontrager, 95, Grantzville, Md., died Oct. 24. Spouse: Irvin E. Yoder (deceased). Parents: John and Mary Eash Bontrager. Children: James E., Jason I., Joseph M., Marietta J. Farlow, Marlene S. Tice, Judith M. Yoder; seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 28 at Springs Mennonite Church, Springs, Pa.

Zehr, Kenneth John, 78, Lowville, N.Y., died Oct. 27. Spouse: Belva Mae Lyndaker Zehr. Parents: Alvin R. and Vera Moser Zehr. Children: Linda Gerow, Kathryn Jantzi, Michael J., Allen J. Sr., Douglas A., Beryl K.; 15 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 31 at Lowville Mennonite Church.

First Mennonite Church, Denver, Colo., is seeking a ***pastor of child and youth faith formation***. Please contact Herm Weaver, Herm@MountainStatesMC.org, if interested.

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Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership seeks a ***full-time communication and convention planning coordinator*** to join its Communication and Convention Planning teams. The communication and convention planning coordinator will give primary leadership to the convention planning communication needs, as well as giving leadership to convention planning for servant projects, children's program and junior high program. This position provides a unique opportunity to impact Mennonite Church USA's mission, goals and resources through communication and convention planning. The ideal candidate will possess strong interpersonal communication skills and work well within a team. She or he should be detail oriented and possess a good understanding of communication theory and strategies. Events planning experience is a plus. Experience in writing and editing is required. Fluency in Spanish is highly desired. For a detailed job description see http://www.mennoniteusa.org/Default.aspx?tabid=533#ccpc or to submit a resumé, cover letter and work samples, contact Carol Epp at CarolE@MennoniteUSA.org or call 866-866-2872 and ask for Carol. Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership is an equal opportunity employer and encourages women and racial-ethnic people to apply.

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Maple Grove Mennonite Church of Atglen, Pa., is seeking an ***associate pastor*** with emphasis on youth/young adult ministry. Duties include assisting the lead pastor with general pastoral duties, preaching monthly, helping coordinate and bringing spiritual guidance to youth/young adult ministry. The position is ¾-time. The church is located in rural western Chester County, Pennsylvania. Contact 610-593-6658 for an information packet or send a resumé to Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Associate Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 480, Atglen, PA 19310-0480.

Pine Creek Chapel an evangelical Anabaptist congregation in Arcadia, Fla., is seeking a ***pastor***. Interested candidates should email: pinecreekchapel@gmail.com or call 863-494-9166.

Eastern Mennonite Missions seeks ***part-time (50 percent) executive assistant to the president***. Required: 2+ years of administrative experience, mission commitment, computer and interpersonal skills. Apply by Nov. 25; begins Jan. 4, 2010. Contact Jeanette Hunt at jeanetteh@emm.org or 717-898-2251.

Spruce Lake, a dynamic retreat ministry for families and adults in northeastern Pennsylvania, has two full-time positions open: ***operations manager*** and ***guest group coordinator***. Salary and liberal benefits package provided. Full job descriptions and application at www.sprucelake.org. Send resumé with application to Mark Swartley, Executive Director, Spruce Lake Retreat, RR 1, Box 605, Canadensis, PA 18325; phone 800-822-7505, ext. 118; fax 570-595-0328; email jobs1109@sprucelake.org.

Men's retreat, Jan. 14-15, 2010, at **Spruce Lake Retreat** (Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania) with speaker John Fischer and praise-and-worship artists, Next 2 Nothing: a short but powerful event that could easily be life-changing! Invite your church or community men's group and call 800-822-7505 for reservations. www.sprucelake.org.

Western District Conference, with offices in North Newton, Kan., invites applications for the full-time position of ***conference minister***. As primary administrative officer and head of staff, this person will provide leadership to the conference's mission, ministry and well-being. Experience in pastoral ministry and a Master of Divinity degree (or its equivalent) are required. More information is available on the WDC Web site. Position begins June 15, 2010. Apply with letter of application and completed MLI to Tom Harder, search committee chair, at tom.harder@lorraineavenue.org, no later than Dec. 31, 2009.

Bluffton University invites applications for the following ***full-time tenure-track faculty positions*** to begin fall 2010.

Elementary education generalist: Doctorate preferred and required for tenure. Minimum three years teaching experience in early or upper elementary grades required. Experience teaching in an urban environment and literacy courses in a college-level teacher licensure program highly desirable. Familiarity with Ohio licensure programs and NCATE accreditation also desirable. Teach undergraduate and graduate early childhood [Pre-K to grade 3] and elementary [grades 4-5] education courses. Supervise teacher education candidates in various field and clinical practice settings. Serve as academic advisor to teacher education candidates.

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TESOL & English composition: Ph.D. in rhetoric/composition, linguistics or English (ABD will be considered), with advanced degree in TESOL. Background or experience in public school teaching desirable. Direct TESOL program (minor and education endorsement). Teach TESOL, language and composition courses.

Review of applications begins Dec. 1 for these searches and continues until an appointment is made. Compensation is commensurate with education and experience within the university pay scale. Send letter of interest, curriculum vita or resumé, three letters of reference (submitted directly from referee or if necessary from placement office) and official transcripts to Elaine Suderman, Academic Affairs, Bluffton University, 1 University Drive, Bluffton, OH 45817-2104. See www.bluffton.edu for additional details. Bluffton University welcomes applications from all academically qualified people who respect the Anabaptist-Mennonite peace church tradition and endorse Christian higher education in a liberal arts environment. All Bluffton students are required to engage in cross-cultural studies and the university is pursuing initiatives to diversify both the faculty and student body. Members of underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply. EOE.

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Books on kingdom, the Bible and spirituality

Gordon Houser

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Each year, before Christmas, we review some recent books to whet our appetites for the many out there that can help us in our spiritual lives.

Kingdom: The kingdom of God is a dominant theme of the Gospels and receives attention in three recent books.

Imminent Domain: The Story of the Kingdom of God and Its Celebration by Ben Witherington III (Eerdmans, 2009, $12) addresses the already and the not-yet of the kingdom, which he calls "the Dominion of God" to emphasize that it "cannot be limited to a specific locale" but is "found wherever God's transforming Spirit is at work throughout the world." This is a helpful introduction for general readers to the kingdom of God.

Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation by James K.A. Smith (Baker Academic, 2009, $21.99) is a more demanding, academic book but rich in insights. The first of three books presenting a theology of culture, this one provides "an invitation to re-vision Christian education as a formative rather than just an informative project. A philosopher, Smith addresses culture and worship in encouraging a God-directed, embodied love through worship rather than an idea-centered or belief-centered approach.

Christian America and the Kingdom of God by Richard T. Hughes (University of Illinois Press, 2009, $29.95) makes four arguments: (1) the notions of Christian America and the kingdom of God are polar opposites, (2) Christian America often behaves in unchristian ways, (3) Christians should behave in ways consistent with their faith, and (4) biblical and theological illiteracy runs rampant in the United States, even in America's churches. While not new to many of us, this is a relevant book that needs to reach a wide audience.

Bible: Given the rampant biblical illiteracy in many of our churches, Andy Deane's straightforward book *Learn to Study the Bible: Forty Different Step-by-Step Methods to Help You Discover, Apply and Enjoy God's Word* (Xulon Press, 2009, $15.99) is a helpful resource. Though some may argue with Deane's views of Scripture, his 40 different methods are practical and presented clearly.

John M. Miller practices Bible study in his book *Revelation: Making Sense of Its Message in the 21st Century* (Leola Publisher, 2009, $21.97). Against those who either ignore Revelation or see it as a literal prediction of future violence, Miller interprets the Bible's final book as an apocalyptic writing that depicts God's victory through persevering love. He concludes that Revelation sees the church as missionary and that "the nature of its ministry is healing."

Spirituality: Spirituality is about how we follow the Spirit and live out our faith. Many books address this topic—from various angles.

The Dark Night: A Gift of God by Daniel P. Schrock (Herald Press, 2009, $16.99) addresses a topic mostly ignored by Mennonites—the baffling experience many have of spiritual dryness or languor. A Mennonite pastor trained in spiritual direction, Schrock explains this phenomenon and shows how it can be a gift that draws us into a deeper experience of God's presence.

God Hides in Plain Sight: How to See the Sacred in a Chaotic World by Dean Nelson (Brazos Press, 2009, $15.99) takes another angle, that of seeing God's activity in everyday affairs. Nelson is an engaging writer and uses many stories to illustrate his insights, including this definition of jazz, which sounds like life: "ordered disorder, with sudden bursts of revelation."

In his poetic memoir, *Nightwatch: An Inquiry Into Solitude, Alone on the Prairie with the Hutterites* (Good Books, 2009, $9.95), Robert Rhodes alternates reflections on his and his family's life at Starland Hutterite Colony near Gibbon, Minn., with stories of growing up in Arkansas in a prosperous Catholic family. He addresses solitude and loneliness and their interplay in his life. This is a vulnerable, thoughtful memoir that helps us reflect on our individual and corporate lives.

There are many more books out there, ripe for reading and sharing with friends. TM

DVDS

The Class (PG-13, in French with subtitles) is based on a novel and stars the author, who plays a version of himself, a teacher in a rough school in Paris. The students, ages 14 and 15 and played by nonactors, struggle with immigration issues, self-identity and gender. The conversations between the dedicated teacher and brazen students is mesmerizing. Troubles with a particular student show the complexity of teacher-student conflicts.—*Anna Groff*

Sugar (R) follows the story of Miguel Santos, a.k.a. Sugar, a pitcher from the Dominican Republic as he struggles to make it to the big leagues and pull himself and his family out of poverty. It shows the vicissitudes of pro baseball while giving attention to the joy of play.—*gh*

TV

Endgame, shown on most PBS stations on Oct. 25 and available for viewing at pbs.org, is a feature film that depicts true events leading up to the end of apartheid in South Africa. The film tells a little-known story about talks held behind the scenes between Afrikaners and representatives of the African National Congress. It is a drama that doesn't preach. Instead it shows both the difficulty and the efficacy of talking rather than fighting. Though many forces tried to bring change through force, it was a determined British businessman who helped enemies talk and find a way to peace without bloodshed.—*gh*

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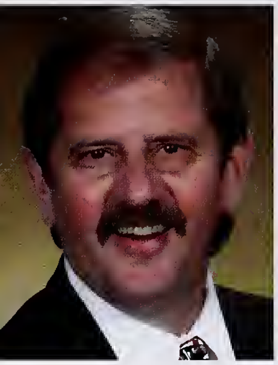

Everett J. Thomas

Give thanks for each other

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.
—John 15:12,13

There are many ways we can give life to each other. Earlier this month, Betty Roth Weaver chose to give life to a colleague by donating a kidney (see page 23). During this Thanksgiving season, Weaver's commitment to another person in the church reminds us of one of our greatest blessings: the sisters and brothers who form our faith community.

Jesus did not ask us to love each other. He commanded it. For Mennonites, who usually bring a work ethic to every dimension of discipleship, we seldom assess our obedience to this commandment. Maybe it's because it's in the air we breathe. Like fish that take no notice of the water in which they swim, we are oblivious to the strong communitarian ethic in which we swim.

Weaver's donation is a form of mutual aid. Mutual aid among Anabaptists is a distinctive. At the national, churchwide level, we have another mutual aid accomplishment for which we can also give thanks: passage of The Corinthian Plan.

This Thanksgiving, let's thank God for each other.

Against the economic headwinds generated by the Great Recession, Mennonite Church USA delegates called for and got a health access plan that will provide insurance for many underinsured and uninsured pastors. We have published letters from some who consider this plan a half-measure—why not provide a health access plan for all members? But we must start somewhere, and this inspiring achievement may be the foundation upon which even greater mutual aid can be built.

Let us give thanks for each leader, congregation, agency and institution that helped make this happen. We know that the added cost may mean fewer resources for other important efforts. But The Corinthian Plan is also about donating our kidneys—vital resources—to each other. It is a tangible, measurable, verifiable way that we are fulfilling Christ's commandment.

Our usually unrecognized communitarian impulses can lead to exclusivity. But in his Leadership column (page 18), Mennonite Mission Network president Stanley Green describes a way for us to apply our natural community-building instincts at the missional edge of the church.

"From imposition and objectification of the 'targets' of our mission," Green writes, "perhaps we can also imagine new ways of being in mission. Beginning around the midpoint of last century, Mennonites took seriously the need to reflect the example of Christ in their encounter with people of other cultures. That approach can best be described as accompaniment."

For the past year, the ministers at our congregation, College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., have employed a phrase that means the same thing as "accompaniment." Repeatedly we hear stories of members who "sit at the table of the other."

There is something counterintuitive about this for Mennonites accustomed to providing potluck meals and then inviting others in. Now we are the ones sitting at meals provided by others' hospitality. This is "accompaniment" and a way to love others who may become part of God's kingdom.

After interviewing Weaver and Krissie Boss, the woman who would receive Weaver's kidney, I began to see the strength of our communitarian practices in many places. Grace and Truth columnist Isaac Villegas (page 2) provides another example with his usual eloquence.

"God's grace is an invitation to get mixed up with a bunch of ordinary people," Villegas writes, "and realize you love them—and to come to know this love as what God feels like."

This Thanksgiving, let's thank God for each other—grateful for the bonds of fellowship within our local faith communities as well as within Mennonite Church USA. In doing so, we realize a measure of our obedience to Christ's commandment to give life to each other as friends.—*ejt*

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Breaking in and bursting out

Ron Byler is acting executive director of Mennonite Church USA. Contact him at RonB@mennoniteusa.org.

In the 15th year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius. … Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. … and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.
—excerpted from Luke 3:1-6

This Advent season, many Mennonite Church USA and Canada congregations will be using the churchwide resources for Advent and Christmas. I'm grateful to the team of writers from the Toronto area who created these resources on a theme that is so vital to our future as a church.

"I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me," we read in Malachi 3:1. God is breaking in, not just in the cosmos but in our communities. Introducing these Advent resources, *Leader* magazine (Fall) invites us to have "bifocal vision"—to see the big picture of God's purpose in the world and God's action in our neighborhoods.

Southeast Mennonite Conference showed it understands this bifocal vision when it acted on the human trafficking resolution passed by delegates at the Mennonite Church USA Convention in Columbus this past summer. The resolution voices our opposition to all forms of human slavery in North America and around the world. Southeast Conference became a supporting organization for the National Farm Worker Ministry, an interfaith organization that supports farm workers with nonviolent, noncoercive educational programs that are fair to both worker and grower.

Another delegate statement in 2003 on immigration encourages Mennonite congregations "to act on behalf of our immigrant brothers and sisters regardless of their legal status." For my congregation, Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., bifocal vision has meant increasing our daycare scholarships for immigrant families and actively participating in community organizations extending hospitality to the thousands of immigrants in the community.

The Advent texts reveal justice, peace and righteousness, says Houston Mennonite Church pastor Marty Troyer. These texts invite us to shift our thinking from the global to include the local. We live in the United States, but we also live in Philadelphia, Peoria, Parnell and Pasadena.

"Situating ourselves locally broadens and strengthens the gospel of peace," says Troyer.

As a denomination, we have identified four missional church priorities: global connections, leadership development, antiracism and holistic witness. Each gives us an opportunity as a church to extend God's breaking in and bursting out to our own community.

At the October Constituency Leaders Council for conference leaders, conferences identified 130 locations where congregations and congregations are identifying with new church initiatives or planting new churches. There appears to be new energy among us to prepare the way of the Lord.

The Advent resources encourage congregations to use the Advent candlelighting ritual to acknowledge God's presence and action in the world. Lighting the "God" candle each Sunday reminds us that God is among us. As we light candles each Sunday, each congregation can also be reminded of one way God is acting in its own community.

As we light these candles, we affirm our hope in God and our confidence in God's future for us.

May your congregation experience a breaking in and bursting out of God's Spirit as you use these resources. This is a way to identify more fully with the more than 1,100 congregations in Mennonite Church USA and Canada as we discover how to join in what God is doing in the world "so that all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6).

TheMennonite

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Cover: Photo by Gordon Houser

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Respond to world in turmoil as Jesus did

I much appreciated Susan Mark Landis' article on listening and learning from each other ("Listen and Learn from Each Other," Oct. 20). Communicating as an adult rather than a child is sometimes difficult, but in a healthy community it is essential. We need to recognize how beautiful a diversity of ideas and perspectives can be as we attempt to find responses to the complex issues we face in our churches, societies and in the world.

It is easy for us to look at the world and decide how we (in our childish ways) want to respond to it and then seek justification for that response in the Bible. It is more difficult, however, to first go to the Scriptures to see how God, through Jesus Christ, asks us to respond to a world in turmoil and confusion and then to take the risks to respond accordingly. Thanks, Susan, for encouraging us to move beyond national polarization and again pore over Scripture to find ways to live together.—*Max Ediger, Bangkok, Thailand*

Articles on Mennonite women

Thank you so much for the way you made space for the three stories about Mennonite Women USA programs in the Nov. 3 issue. I was thrilled with how the pictures looked with the backgrounds removed. I think you used my three favorite pictures in the African Anabaptist Women Theologian articles: the three graduates and Mary Schertz and Rebecca Osiro ("Moved by the Spirit"), and Nina with Sibusisiwe ("A Life-Changing Event"). Thanks also to Heidi Martin for the way she told the story of the event in Middletown, Pa. ("Sister-Care Event Offers 'Sowing' Circle"). It was great that Heidi could attend for the whole time. *—Rhoda Keener, executive director, Mennonite Women USA*

IN THIS ISSUE

Jordan is a country that demonstrates sacrificial peacemaking. For some 40 years it has hosted Palestinian refugees removed from ancestral lands west of the Jordan River. Now they also host Iraqi refugees. Gordon Houser (pages 8-11 and 32) is the third editor from *The Mennonite* to participate in a tour of this wonderful little country sponsored by the Jordan Tourism Board. Another reason for the attention we give to Jordan: This is where Mennonite Central Committee's Middle East offices are located. In the news section we carry another story of peacemaking: Two congregations in Middlebury, Ind., that split 86 years ago are reuniting (page 19). On page 25, MCC U.S. executive director Rolando Santiago explains why he is resigning.—*Editor*

Too much credit for event

Thank you for Donita Wiebe-Neufeld's piece about the recent Young Adult Fellowship retreat (News Digest, Nov. 3). As a committee, we greatly appreciate any help we can get to spread the word about the work we are doing with young adults from Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA on behalf of the sister denominations.

It is only right to offer one clarifier to the article, which ends by saying, "Organizer David Maurer, West Liberty, Ohio, said, ..." While I do serve as a member of the organizing committee and was present to help in carrying out the retreat, I did not do nearly the amount of work in planning this retreat as others on the committee, such as Alissa Bender. She was on the ground in Calgary and did a tremendous amount of leg work that someone like me, who flew in from Ohio, would never have been able to bring together. Perhaps this is understood by the average reader. But given the number of people that we find know little about our committee, I would hate for people to see me as the organizer of the retreat when I was only a small part of the planning.—*David Maurer, West Liberty, Ohio*

Use the magazine as forum for storytelling

Regarding the Nov. 3 editorial, "About the Moratorium," by Everett Thomas: If *The Mennonite* were to decide that it wishes to serve as a public forum for mature and Christlike dialogue on human sexuality, I would heartily endorse that. But doing so will only be effective and in line with the church's official position of dialogue if an attempt is made to give serious space to the whole range of opinions on the issue.

The editorial led me and others to fear—perhaps prematurely?—that Thomas was staking out a partisan position and might favor some views at the expense of others. I especially endorse the idea of using your magazine as a forum for storytelling, for relaying life experience on the issue. This should encompass not only those who struggle to remain faithful to the church's traditional teachings—as Thomas pointed out—but also those who have come to believe that God endorses a full expression of their sexuality, along with those of more conservative bent who wish to explain how they are harmed by a more inclusive stance.

I also heartily endorse the idea of enforcing certain rules of the game. We Mennonites have sometimes shown a cultural shortcoming in our inability to disagree kindly. There is a huge role for an editorial staff to play in setting up rules of play that encourage polite and respectful disagreement and that do not tolerate mudslinging. I would enthusiastically welcome *The Mennonite* stepping into this void and providing that kind of a forum—provided that all views are given equal respect.—*Ray Fisher, Barto, Pa.*

Deficiencies in proposal

"About the Moratorium" (Nov. 3) has six bulleted suggested articles for future continuation of the dialogue on homosexuality. I am thankful for the openness of the editor and board to continue discussion of this matter that has again been given space in this important magazine. Although the six suggested topics for discussion seem comprehensive, I suggest some possible deficiencies:

1. The last one calls for a feature story of a person with same-sex orientation who remains faithful to the church's teaching on homosexuality. Should that not be balanced by a story on a person with same-sex orientation that lives in a committed same-sex relationship, respects the church and wants to continue in it because of lifelong association and commitment to its Anabaptist ideals?

2. One calls for highlighting the different ways we read the Bible. This will only be useful and valid if it includes at least two different people that come to different conclusions using valid biblical hermeneutics. Otherwise I fear that from the six suggested we will have an outcome that will be fatally flawed in their overall tone. It could lead to a one-sided conclusion that will satisfy many but that will be used for the next 10 years to justify a particular, probably traditional position.—*Larry Eby, Albany, Ore.*

Marriage and birth announcements

I just wanted to add another vote of disappointment regarding the decision to drop the marriage and birth announcements in the new format ("Board Approves *The Mennonite* Redesign," Oct. 6). I have never received the annual readers survey, despite having been a *Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* reader for most of my 34 years, so I thought I would take this opportunity to note that I read For the Record first, news items second. And the rest? A connection to Mennonite happenings is what I am looking for when I read *The Mennonite* and hope the editorial staff can find one page out of the new 64-page format for these items. —*Hannah Gascho Rempel, Corvallis, Ore.*

Editor's note: Beginning January 2010, we will post birth and marriage announcements on our Web site. To accommodate those who ask to continue receiving these announcements, we will mail paper copies of what is posted there.

Jesus did not need teaching

In response to "A Life-Changing Event" by Patricia Burdette (Nov. 3): This is now the fourth time I've heard "the interpretation of the Syrophoenician woman's story as a learning experience for Jesus" by speakers and writers in Mennonite circles. A new thing, for sure, this teaching the One who made the heavens and the earth. "For by him all things were created … all things were created by him and for him" (Colossians 1:16). Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! … Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" (Romans 11:13-14) When Jesus was 12, the learned were amazed at his answers and understanding (Luke 2:47), yet 21st-century Mennonites are convinced a woman taught mercy to the God of all mercy. How arrogant.

Had Jesus already met this amazing woman before he told Nicodemus "God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)? Doesn't he say, "I only do what the Father tells me" (John 8:28)? What gospel are we reading?

The Mennonite church needs to repent. Peace is not the gospel, salvation in Jesus' life, death and resurrection is the gospel. Sin is what needs to be dealt with, or peace is unattainable.—*Jean Martin, Valparaiso, Ind.*

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Mennonite Central Committee sends more school kits to this country than any other: (39 votes)

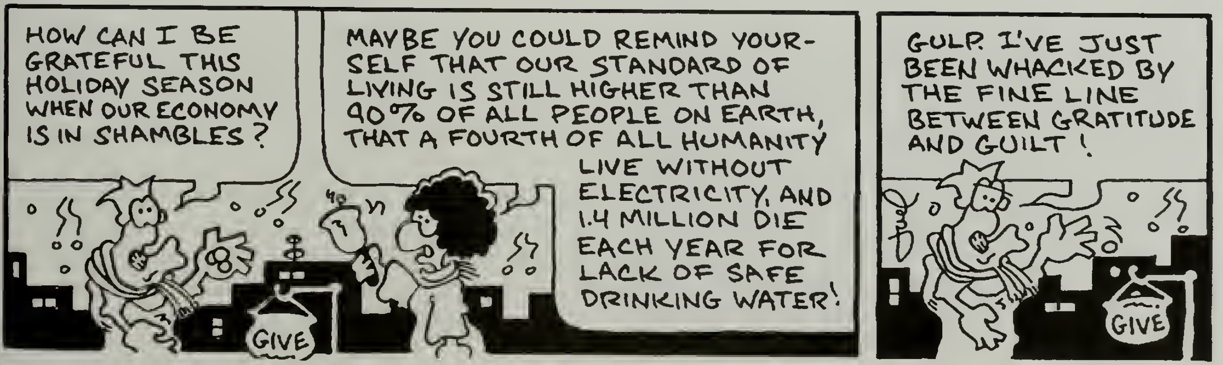
○ Jordan (23%)
○ Colombia (21%)
○ Congo (33%)
○ Indonesia (23%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Note: See page 10 for the correct answer to this question.

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


HOW CAN I BE GRATEFUL THIS HOLIDAY SEASON WHEN OUR ECONOMY IS IN SHAMBLES?
MAYBE YOU COULD REMIND YOURSELF THAT OUR STANDARD OF LIVING IS STILL HIGHER THAN 90% OF ALL PEOPLE ON EARTH, THAT A FOURTH OF ALL HUMANITY LIVE WITHOUT ELECTRICITY, AND 1.4 MILLION DIE EACH YEAR FOR LACK OF SAFE DRINKING WATER!
GIVE
GULP. I'VE JUST BEEN WHACKED BY THE FINE LINE BETWEEN GRATITUDE AND GUILT!
GIVE

IN BRIEF

Uncomfortable pews

Gregory A. Boyd, pastor in St. Paul, Minn., says that the clearer he is with his congregation about the cost of discipleship, the smaller his congregation gets. His church board tells him that he should go on the road giving seminars on church shrinkage rather than on church growth. Boyd says the church needs leaders who will preach a vision of the kingdom of God that looks like "Jesus' self-sacrificial love." Says Boyd: "We need visionary leaders and teachers who will challenge the status quo and make people uncomfortable in the pews, who will help them wake up to the many ways that our lives have been co-opted by the culture."—*The Christian Century*

Goshen offers Advent devotions

Goshen (Ind.) College is again offering an online devotions to help believers prepare during Advent for Christmas. Beginning Nov. 23 and culminating on Christmas Day, students, faculty and staff provide weekday reflections based on the Sunday's upcoming lectionary Scripture passages. They are available online at blog.goshen.edu/devotions, by daily email or via an RSS feed.—*Goshen College*

Pastors group raises concerns about MC USA

GOSHEN, Ind.—A group of Mennonite pastors, mostly in the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference, has lodged concerns with the following: their conference, Mennonite Church USA leaders and Mennonite World Conference leaders. The group is asking that Mennonite Church USA stop the activism of those who are pushing for the denomination to change its teaching position on homosexuality. Called Anabaptist Immigrant Church Leaders Council (www.aiclc.net), the group includes 24 pastors who signed a letter of protest sent to acting executive director Ron Byler on Sept. 21.

In the letter, the group called for three actions: that Mennonite Church USA make unequivocally clear its leadership and membership position, bring dialogue to a close "in the near future" by affirming the current teaching position, and establish a framework of accountability for congregations, conferences and pastors to "abide by and uphold … scriptural standards."

Attached to their letters was a "fact sheet" describing the activism of three groups pushing for the change: the "Open Letter" group, PinkMennos and Menno Neighbors. For the full texts of the letters, go to www.themennonite.org.

"Our Mennonite statements have been remarkably consistent [with regard to human sexuality]," Byler said in an Oct. 14 letter of response. "Each says clearly what we believe as a church and each acknowledges that, as Anabaptists, we continue to be open to the Holy Spirit among us as we discern together what the Scriptures say to us."

Byler also referred to an action taken by the Convention 2009 Delegate Assembly calling on the Executive Board to ask conferences what they need to address conflict around this issue. Those responses are due to the Executive Board in early January 2010.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Sandra Montes-Martinez

Mennonite Men gives Dallas church $35,000

Two 17-year-olds joined their grandfather Sept. 13 in presenting a JoinHands Mennonite Church Building grant for $35,000 to Iglesia Menonita Luz del Evangelio in Dallas, Texas, to build its new church building. In addition, Schowalter Foundation gave the church $12,000 for renovations to its existing buildings. Praying over the gift are (from left) Luz del Evangelio pastor Juan Limones; Bianca Limones; Abel Gomez; Gilberto Flores, associate conference minister for Western District Conference; Mennonite Men coordinator Jim Gingerich; his grandson Adrian Revell and his grand-daughter Shenise Allen of Moundridge, Kan., who attends Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, Kan., which has a sister relationship with Luz del Evangelio.—*Gordon Houser*

Former mission leader Ernest Bennett dies

GOSHEN, Ind.—H. Ernest Bennett, longtime mission administrator, died on Nov. 11 in Goshen.

Ernest Bennet

Bennett led mission efforts in the former Mennonite Church for more than two decades.

Bennett spent most of his career with Mennonite Board of Missions, including 21 years as executive secretary. Mennonite Board of Missions is a predecessor of Mennonite Mission Network. Bennett also served with Mennonite Health Association, Mennonite Health Assembly and Mennonite Central Committee.

Bennett was a devoted member of Prairie Street Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind. Bennett married Earla Hostetter in 1941, and she died Nov. 10, 2008.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Mennonite Schools join The Corinthian Plan

NEWTON, Kan.—Mennonite Schools Council, an association of 36 schools, has joined The Corinthian Plan. The group voted to have the Associated Mennonite Schools and Camps Benefits Plan relate to Mennonite Church USA's health care plan, The Corinthian Plan, through reinsurance. MSC will now pay a portion of its reinsurance premium to a common fund that will be managed by Mennonite Mutual Aid. This fund will be used to pay a portion of the large claims among the various church plan pools participating in the new denominational health plan. This approach is similar to the model that is proposed for the Mennonite higher education institutions.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Mennonite Women USA approve new mission

NEWTON, Kan.—The Mennonite Women USA board approved new mission and vision statements for the organization at a Nov. 7 meeting. The new guiding documents state: "Our mission at

DAILY TERROR
walking in war's aftermath

Cheryl Treece

uster bomb display travels to Bluffton, Goshen
ennonite Central Committee's "Daily Terror" cluster bomb play was part of an October weekend of activities at First ennonite Church in Bluffton, Ohio. Louise Matthews, director the Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center, studies the exhibit, ich features stories from around the world.—*MCC*

Mennonite Women USA is to empower women and women's groups as we nurture our life in Christ, study the Bible, use our gifts, hear each other and engage in mission and service" and, "Mennonite Women USA invites women across generations, cultures and places to share and honor our stories, care for each other and express our prophetic voice boldly as we seek to follow Christ."—*Mennonite Church USA*

Bridgefolk ED resigns, leadership revamped

COLLEGEVILLE, Minn.—Bridgefolk, a movement of Mennonites and Catholics, held its 10th anniversary conference in August. Now it is entering a time of transition. Kent Yoder resigned to pursue graduate studies in Europe, after serving two years as executive director.

Recognizing the demands on the largely volunteer circle of Bridgefolk leaders, the board recommended a change in leadership structure. Gerald Schlabach will return to his role as executive director, with a focus on working with the board to tend the vision of Bridgefolk and mentor new leadership.

Lois Kauffman, Central District Conference minister, will serve as conference coordinator. Mary Schertz will represent Bridgefolk at an International Ecumenical Peace Conference this summer. Schertz is the director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, Elkhart, Ind.—*Bridgefolk.net*

MCA creates benevolence fund for camps

EAST PERTH, Ontario—The Mennonite Camping Association board held its annual winter meeting at Hidden Acres Camp in East Perth on Nov. 4.

Here the board established a Benevolence Fund that will be available to member camps that experience loss due to a natural disaster such as a flood or fire. The board created guidelines for distribution of the fund, which generally will not exceed $1,500. It will also provide opportunity for camps to contribute to the needs of other camps.

MCA is continuing to work with Mennonite Disaster Service to provide an opportunity for camp staff to work together and assist in a disaster relief area. The board is working toward a date in November 2010.

The 2010 fall meeting of the board will be held in the Elkhart, Ind., area in order to allow the board formally to express appreciation to Evon Castro for her many years of service to MCA.—*MCA*

Shanks honored for work with AIC churches

ELKHART, Ind.—David A. and Wilma Shank were honored for their lifetime of work on Oct. 31. Their work includes 10 years with African-Initiated Churches in Côte d'Ivoire. A banquet sponsored by the Association of Anabaptist-Mennonite Missiologists at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, highlighted the Shanks' contributions to mission. The Shanks served first in Belgium from 1950-1973, then in west Africa from 1979 to 1989. James Krabill presented a certificate to his mentors. Krabill served in Côte d'Ivoire with the Shanks and now is senior executive for global ministries with Mennonite Mission Network. The honor included announcement of a book of David's writings that Krabill is editing and the Institute of Mennonite Studies is publishing. The book, titled *Mission from the Margins: Writings from the Life and Ministry of David A. Shank*, will be completed early in 2010.—*AMBS*

Spiritual directors gather at first-ever retreat

GOSHEN, Ind.—The first-ever U.S. retreat for Mennonite spiritual directors took place Oct. 26-28 at the Jesuit Retreat House in Parma, Ohio. Wendy Wright led the group in reflecting on John 15:12-17 and the theme of friendship in Christian theology. Wright teaches theology and spirituality at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. A total of 46 directors attended. About 115 people appear in the Mennonite Spiritual Directors list available on the Mennonite Church USA Web site.—*Mennonite Church USA*

—*compiled by Anna Groff*

IN BRIEF

Bluffton professor teacher of the year

Lucia Unrau was awarded the Ohio Music Teachers Association Collegiate Teacher of the Year award during the annual state conference Nov. 5-7 in Van Wert, Ohio. She is professor of music and music department chair at Bluffton (Ohio) University. Unrau is the first Bluffton music faculty member to receive the award. She was nominated by teachers in the Middle West district, which ranges from the Findlay area to Bellefontaine and west to the Indiana border. —*Bluffton College*

EMU president is council chair

College president Loren Swartzendruber is serving as chair of the Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia for the 2009-10 fiscal year. He is the president of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. Swartzendruber was elected at the fall meeting of the CICV board of directors and will serve in this role through Sept. 30, 2010. CICV is an association of 27 nonprofit, private colleges and universities in Virginia.—*EMU*

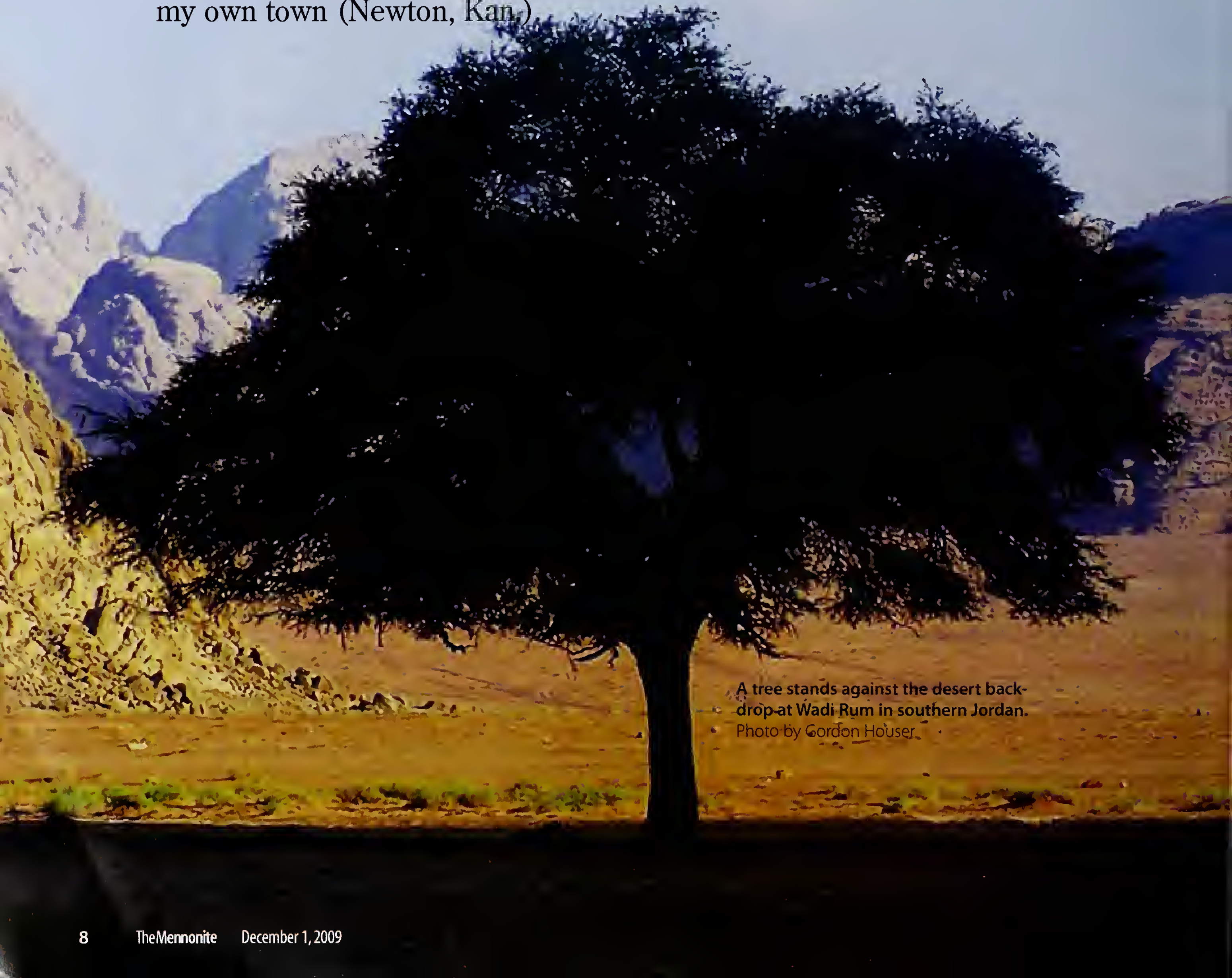
Jordan an oasis of peace

Reflections from a trip to Jordan

by Gordon Houser

In a region often identified with conflict, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan stands out as a place where peace and religious acceptance is both preached and practiced. Though I am a Mennonite who preaches (and tries to practice) peace, a trip to this land in the Middle East taught me much.

When friends and family learned that I was traveling to Jordan in late September, many asked, "Is that safe?" I wasn't worried, but I understood the question. After I returned from my week there, I assured them I felt as safe as in my own town (Newton, Kan.).



A tree stands against the desert backdrop at Wadi Rum in southern Jordan. Photo by Gordon Houser

I traveled with 17 other Christian journalists from the United States and Canada. We represented periodicals that are part of three organizations: Catholic Press Association (nine), Associated Church Press (five, including me) and Evangelical Press Association (four). While the Jordan Tourism Board paid for our tour, JTB has no control over what I write here. And while it obviously wants to promote tourism, which is more than 10 percent of Jordan's GNP, larger issues are involved.

Among the first places we visited was the Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center, housed in the Melkite Catholic Church in Amman, part of the Patriarchate of Antioch.

The center's director, Father Nabil Haddad, told us his ancestors were at Pentecost (Acts 2). As Arab Christians they are living witnesses within a Muslim majority, making up about 5 percent of the population. (In 1950, Christians made up about 30 percent of the population.)

"Jordan is the best model for Christian-Muslim relations," Fr. Haddad said. Eighty Muslim leaders work with the center, which began in 2003. An imam (Muslim cleric) who is part of Imams for Coexistence, once gave a sermon in which he called Americans "brothers and sisters."

In answer to a question from our group, Fr. Haddad said that Muslims are not allowed to convert, according to sharia (Muslim law). "We don't carry out missionary work because we want to keep what we have," he said. Those who try to convert Muslims do more damage to Jordanian Christians than good.

Fr. Haddad pointed out that Arab Christians are in the Bible and in the Qur'an. The Prophet Muhammed was married to a Christian and welcomed Christians into his first mosque in Medina, he said. This kind of organization works in Jordan because there is no hostility between Muslims and Christians, he said.

Later that day we visited Prince El Hassan bin Talal, brother of King Hussein, who died in 1999, and uncle to King Abdullah. Having passed through security and been instructed to address him as "your royal highness," we were taken aback when the prince came into the room unannounced and shook hands and greeted each of us.

He proceeded to talk about religion and politics, the topics we are told to avoid in polite company, right? Speaking fluent English (he was trained at

Continued on page 10

Jordan is the best model for Christian-Muslim relations.—Fr. Nabil Haddad

Continued from page 9

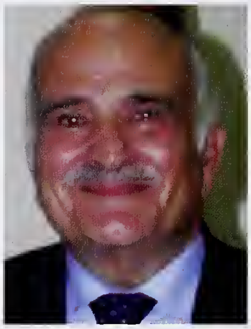
Oxford University in England), the prince displayed an erudite yet passionate concern for peace in the world.

"At the end of the day," he said, "we all should support civil rights and sanctity of human life."

He addressed so-called Muslim suicide bombers: "There's nothing fundamentally religious about fundamentalists." He called such actions part of the "hatred industry."

He described governance as "good bedside manner," knowing how to talk to people. Those who cannot live without war portray themselves as warriors, he said.

In order to put a halt to the hatred industry, he said, we must do something for people, especially the impoverished. And strategies against terrorism, he added, should address the causes, such as poverty.



There's nothing fundamentally religious about fundamentalists.

—Prince El Hassan bin Talal

He told a story of a time when some political leaders were visiting. He showed them some Iraqi refugee children who were sleeping in the street during the winter. They had nowhere to go. Leaders must keep such people in mind.

The Middle East does not have a way to discuss economics with a human face, he said. In 2050 there will be 55 million unemployed Arabs. At present, 60 percent of Arab youth want to migrate.

What is the role of Christians? he asked. We should study the texts of the other. Prince Hassan has done this. He gave each of us a copy of his book *Christianity in the Arab World*, which he wrote to help fellow Muslims better understand Christianity.

Interfaith dialogue, he said, should be talk about the practice of faith, not an ivory-tower conversation. It is necessary to bring people together and have a civilized framework for disagreement.

The next morning, we had a briefing with Senator Akel Biltaji. He explained that senators are appointed, as in the British system of government. They must verify every law the government proposes, then the king must sign it for it to become law. Jordan's system of government is a combination of monarchy and parliament.

Jordan promotes not tolerance but acceptance of religion.—Senator Akel Biltaji

He offered a lesson in the history of the region and of Jordan, which became a nation in 1921-23 and became independent in 1946, moving from a princedom to a kingdom.

Jordan has been "an oasis of peace" in the region's conflict, he said. Jordan is the second-largest peacekeeping force for the United Nations, he said.

He outlined what he called a 4-P process—piety, prophecy, politics, patriotism (the hijacking of religion)—which he said moves away from the core of religion, which is summarized by "love thy neighbor" and "love thy enemy."

He gave examples of such hijacking of religion by Islamicists. "Jihad" is an inner war (self-denial), giving up pleasures for the sake of purity, he said, not a call to kill people. Jordan's King Abdullah took leadership in opposing the violence of Islamacist terrorism, he said.

Jordan promotes not tolerance but acceptance of religion, he said. The Abrahamic path shows the commonality of the three faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), he said.

He emphasized "peace through tourism": leaving home for a purpose, earning knowledge, practicing people-to-people diplomacy.

In response to a question about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he said, "My cousins [the Jews] cannot see beyond their noses" and react out of fear; they cannot trust.

Fast facts about Jordan

Official name: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Population: 6.3 million

Form of government: a constitutional monarchy with representative government

Religious adherence: 92 percent Sunni Muslim with a small Christian minority (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant)

Length of Mennonite presence in Jordan: 40 years

Number of school kits Mennonite Central Committee sends to Jordan each year: 25,000 (more than to any other country)

Number of groups MCC works with in Jordan: 15

A huge tomb carved into the rock at Petra, one of the seven wonders of the world and Jordan's greatest tourist attraction. Photo by Gordon Houser

Through the week, we visited many sites of biblical and historical interest, including Gedara (where Jesus may have cast demons into a herd of swine), the Jabbok River (where Jacob wrestled with "a man"), the site of Jesus' baptism, Jerash, Madaba (whose people are the direct descendants of some of the earliest Christians), Mt. Nebo (see Deuteronomy 34:1) and Petra, one of the seven wonders of the world.

On Oct. 2 at a hotel on the Dead Sea, I visited with Cindy and Daryl Byler over coffee. The Bylers are Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) representatives for the region that includes Jordan, Palestine, Iran and Iraq. They've been in this position for two years.

MCC has worked in Jordan for 40 years, they said, and 60 years in Palestine.

Primarily the Bylers help support the work of local churches and NGOs (nongovernmental organizations), both Christian and Muslim. They work with 15 groups in the areas of peacebuilding, community development and relief.

A large part of the work in Jordan is with schools, primarily Catholic and Anglican. Caritas Jordan, a Catholic organization, provides education about HIV/AIDS in many schools and also distributes MCC school kits. Jordan receives about 25,000 kits per year, more than any other country.

In Jordan, the Christian schools have a good reputation, Cindy said. Among the schools MCC supports are ones that work with special needs children, who are often seen as a burden or shame in Jordanian society.

Brent Stutzman is a volunteer with MCC's SALT (Serving and Learning Together) program, working at the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf in Salt, Jordan. Volunteer Julie Lytle works at the Arab Episcopal School in Irbid, which is for blind and low-vision children in grades K-6.

MCC has begun working at East-West dialogue with young adults. The Bylers helped organize a meeting in Jordan of 13 young adults from the United States with young adults from the Middle East. This four-day conference has been held twice and done with the Middle East Council of Churches. MCC also sends two local students to the Peacebuilding Institute at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., each year.

Water is a huge political issue in the region. MCC helps villages build catchments to distribute water from springs. They also provide equipment and funding for materials.

Jordan is a place where the work of Mennonites, Catholics and others is welcome alongside that of Muslims. In a region where conflict is widespread, it is a place of peace where hospitality is valued and practiced.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

Note: Editor Everett Thomas is planning to lead a similar tour to Jordan in November 2010; it is specifically for editors of Mennonite Church USA conference newsletters. All expenses (from New York City) for the one week tour will be covered by the Jordan Tourism Board. Editors that are interested can send an email to Editor@themennonite.org or call 574-535-6051.

Mennonite presence in Jordan: **Cindy and Daryl Byler are regional representatives for Mennonite Central Committee.** Photo by Gordon Houser

Photo Anna Groff

Holy wars

by David Kreider

I grew up in Israel, in the aftermath of one of history's most horrific tragedies. Traumatized and desperate after 6 million of their kin were annihilated in gas chambers and death camps across Eastern Europe, my first friends were Jews whose hopes converged in this Jewish State. Sadly, their tragedy has given birth to yet another, causing a conflict that has infected the entire Middle East and three of the world's great faiths—over half the world's population.

War and insecurity have long been part of life in Israel. I remember June 1967, at age 14, digging our bomb shelter, taping up our windows and headlights, the fighter jets, sirens and incoming missiles aimed at the refineries nearby. I remember the anxiety and then five days later the relief as news came in of Egypt's surrender in the Sinai, the capture of the Golan, Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. For Israelis reeling from what was at stake this was a "miracle" of biblical proportions—God had again "delivered his people," as in days of old.

How could God favor one people against another? Doesn't God love Arabs and all people as much as Jews?

Soon I saw how this looked from the other side as we met missionaries and their children from Gaza. My wife to be, Mary Ann, was among them. How could God favor one people against another? Doesn't God love Arabs and all people as much as Jews? Was God in this? As Palestinian Muslims and Christians tried to make sense of the growing magnitude of their injustice, they developed their own liberation theologies. Some took on extreme forms as their outcries fell on deaf ears.

I have seen the power of competing religious ideologies in the Middle East and how they contend for influence in the halls and think tanks of Washington and elsewhere to devastating effect. Is this the vision for the world God had in mind?

Toward holy peace: Jesus was about different politics. His vision was for a social order that transcended all boundaries—a kingdom whose transformative force and governing moral law was love—an all-inclusive love that encompassed God, our neighbors and our enemies.

As I've reflected on the ramifications of those words, I am struck by the focus of Jesus' ministry. Galilee was a Gentile region at the sociological and political edge of Jewish life, a crossroads in that region where Judean culture intersected with those of Greeks, Romans, Syrians, Persians, Arabs and Samaritans who lived along and traveled the trade routes, and where the outcasts of Judaism—the "sinners," the demoniacs, lepers and the poor—were relegated to live among "the heathen" and "unclean." This is where Jesus grew up, spent most of his time and recruited his disciples. He spoke to his diverse audiences here in parables, realizing many of them would not immediately comprehend their meaning.

Jesus was deliberate and passionate about inclusively engaging others outside his tradition, and he often affirmed their faith (Matthew 8:10-12). His most animated act recorded in Scripture (Mark 11:15-17) sees him so infuriated by the merchants' disregard for those whose space they had taken over and exploited in the Temple's Gentile courtyard that he chases them out with a whip.

and holy peace

Hope may come from inter-religious efforts.

The words that burned in his mind were from Isaiah 56:3,6-8: “Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say, ‘The Lord will surely separate me from his people.’ … And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, … and hold fast my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

Paul later put it this way: “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near … [making] both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. … that he might create in himself one new humanity, … thus making peace. … So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but … members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:13-19).

A personal journey: One of the most meaningful experiences of my life has been my opportunity these past two years to get acquainted with several Muslim and Jewish colleagues at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in Harrisonburg, Va. As our friendships grew, several of us talked about forming a group we called Search for Scriptural Common Ground to explore the teachings in our faiths that relate to peacemaking—compassion, love, nonviolence, forgiveness, mercy. As we shared and discussed our Scriptures, we found a growing sense of kinship, trust and awe in the realization that we were also finding our common humanity, a deepening sense of peace and connection in our common quest for God.

Marc Gopin, in his book *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East* (2002), features a remarkable document drawn up by several rabbis and sheikhs called the Jerusalem Peace Agreement, which I found moving:

“We as representatives of the two faiths, of Islam and Judaism, agree to the following: Both the Torah and the Qur’an are expressions of faith which speak of the divine revelation and oneness of G-d . Both … teach their faithful to honor every human being as the living image of G-d. The Holy Torah revealed to Moses, peace be upon him, the prophet of the Jewish people, calls for the respect and honor of every human being regardless of race or creed [and for] special respect and feeling of brotherhood to all believers in the one G-d. Thus Muslims, who worship the same G-d as the Jews, are primary recipients of these feelings of brotherhood.

“The Holy Qur’an revealed to Mohammed, peace be upon him, the prophet of Islam, calls for the respect and honor of every human being regardless of race or creed [and for] special respect and feeling of brotherhood to all believers in the one G-d. Thus Jews, who worship the same G-d as the Muslims, are primary recipients of these feelings of brotherhood.

“Based on these eternal truths of the Holy Torah and the Holy Qur’an, we declare that no human being shall be persecuted, physically or morally, because of their faith or the practice of their beliefs. We also express our wish for greater harmony and understanding between [us]. We the descendents of Ishmael and Isaac, the children of Abraham, are united to offer our prayers … for the end of all enmity and for the beginning of an era of peace, love and compassion.”

There is a groundswell of passion for inter-religious peacemaking around the world.

The question that haunts me as I read that is, Where is Jesus in this, a Jew who also spoke of God as one, and of love and peace and faith beyond the framework of his own tradition (Matthew 8:10-12)? Where were Christians in this?

Reason for hope: There is a groundswell of passion for inter-religious peacemaking around the world. Universities and seminaries are building

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Those who recognize the transformative premises in Jesus' teachings have an increasingly strategic role to play.

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programs in interfaith studies. Closer to home, I am excited to see Eastern Mennonite University, too, developing a center for interfaith engagement and peacebuilding. Initiatives such as "A Common Word between Us and You" from 300 Muslim clerics to Christian leaders in the West and the Interfaith Youth Core movement of Eboo Patel reflect this hunger for mutual understanding and peace. At higher levels of state and policy analysis, the Center for Strategic International Studies and the U.S. Institute of Peace have sponsored landmark studies whose findings point to inter-religious diplomacy as strategic to engaging the ideological underpinnings of terrorist groups whose networks have become global and their designs apocalyptic. World leaders such as Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and Barack Obama have increasingly engaged the language of faith in their work to bridge the political and ideological divides we face in today's world.

Those who recognize the transformative premises in Jesus' teachings have an increasingly strategic role to play in transforming the twisted logics of holy war to those of peace and a new social order built on a moral law of love that bridges enmity. Anabaptist-Mennonites who have espoused these premises of just peace and nonviolence and established a legacy of service and partnership in relief, development, dialogue and peacebuilding are garnering renewed respect for their work across these lines of faith and politics. It is to this exciting work that we have been called in Christ, and with this unprecedented convergence of interest in interfaith engagement we have a remarkable opportunity to inculcate Jesus' vision for the world in these conversations and collaborative efforts for peace.

David Kreider is a graduate of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., where he has also been involved on the advisory board of the emerging Center for Interfaith Engagement. He is a member of Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg.

How to

by Marion Deckert

We need to regain confidence in the message contained in the plain meaning of the text

Be alone with the Holy Scriptures—if you are not, you do not read the Holy Scriptures. This being alone with God's Word is a dangerous matter. But one may defend himself against God's Word. Take the Holy Scriptures, shut your door—but then take 10 dictionaries and 25 commentaries—then you can read it just as quietly and coolly as you read the newspaper.—Soren Kierkegaard

I heard Nelson Krabill talk about what had changed in the Mennonite church in his 12 years as president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. One observation was that the use and authority of the Bible had declined. This decline is part of a much longer historical trend that corresponds roughly with the increase in educational levels among our people. However, it is not only the intellectuals who are less likely to see the Bible as an authority; it is

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If wh

read the Bible

pretty much across the congregation.

From the perspective of the pew it goes something like this: You read the Scripture, it seems to have a pretty plain meaning and you assume it should help guide your life. But then you meet someone who points out that the meaning of a key term, say "peace," in Greek or Hebrew is really a way of talking about justice and therefore you do not understand what the text says.

Or someone points out that in the ancient culture a particular action or practice, say hitting someone on the right cheek, cannot be done without disgracing the hitter, so the meaning is different from what you thought. After repeated instances of this, you begin to think the Scriptures are not something the layman can understand, and Bible reading becomes problematic. Add to this that the pastor is tempted to spend much time talking about the translation and culture and historical setting of the text for the day and less and less time talking about precisely what it says.

The causes of this systematic deconstruction of the text are not hard to find. First is a negative cause. The rapid decline in the idea of word-for-word literal inspiration has not been replaced by a commonly accepted notion of authority. The reasons many of us cannot subscribe to the traditional doctrine of literal inspiration are well known. I think the decline of this doctrine is all to the good. It is nearly impossible to square such a view with a serious respect for the Scriptures. Still, the results of this change in approach has been corrosive. If we cannot accept each specific proposition on face value, then what should our faith be based on?

There is also a powerful positive cause: the rise of a radical theory about the meaning of texts. As a shorthand, I will refer to this as postmodern theory. In its most radical form it claims that no text has an inherent meaning. No text wears its meaning on its sleeve. Meaning only arises as the reader brings her presuppositions, personal history and cultural baggage to the text and thus creates a meaning. This means there are only personal meanings in texts and no foundational, objective, explicit meaning. Once this idea takes hold of one's understanding, it is difficult to avoid a radical relativism. If what I get out of the Scripture is only valid for me, only personal truth, then it is at best inspirational, not authoritative.

"Sola scritptura" (Scripture alone) was a leading idea of Anabaptist reformers. Scripture was the foundation, the touchstone. It was the anchor that tied the church together, no matter how fractious and diverse were the understandings. The postmodern view is radically antifoundationalist. It is based on the conviction that there can be no objective, universal truths. A view that is securely anchored on the foundational belief that there can be no foundational truths is the most disastrous kind of foundationalism.

These and other causes lead the layperson to pretty much give up trying to use Scripture as an authority. Still, no one swims in the chaotic world of possible ideas-values-commitments without an anchor or at least a life raft. In particular, two approaches to Scripture seem to promise some refuge in the wreckage left by postmondernism and the passing of literal inspiration.

One approach is represented by the Jesus Seminar. It is based on the hope that modern linguistic and historical tools will make it possible to sift out of the Gospels the words and sayings that can be ascribed directly to Jesus. The methodology is based on secular scholarship and rational principles. The approach is designed to ignore doctrinal beliefs and faith commitments. The project extracts a discouragingly small set of words and sayings that can be said to be authentic.

The clear implication of this project is that only the authentic words and sayings can be used as authoritative sources for Christian belief and action. It is hard not to see this effort as leading to a new literalism. It is designed to provide a new, albeit truncated, gospel that is authoritative on much the same basis as the old literal inspiration. As tempting as this is to the drowning soul, there are those niggling doubts. First, could their choice of authentic sayings have been influenced by their own biases? Might another group of scholars come up with a different set of authentic passages? And new scholarship, new theories and new historical understandings will come along and become the basis of a revision of the certified words. Can it be right to leave one's religious life in the hands of unknown experts

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et out of the Scripture is only valid for me, only personal truth, then it is at best inspirational, not authoritative.

Translation is a technical task. Understanding words is an everyday task.

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who have no accountability to the Christian community? What kind of faith does this entail?

There is a second, more established approach to gaining some measure of confidence in the Scripture. Here the hope is not to discover the very words of Jesus but to develop a way to find the literal intent of the writers of Scripture. If it was possible to come close to the actual intent of the biblical authors, then surely one would have moved close to the truth hidden in the text.

General textual scholarship leads us to expect that a close study of the languages, histories, cultures and parallel literatures of the original texts should make it possible to settle some of the puzzles that come with ancient texts. If one knew, even approximately, what was in the mind of the writers, then surely it would be appropriate to trust this message.

This general approach lies at the root of all textual scholarship. It is a task essential to any trustworthy translation of Scripture. No one should doubt its importance and validity. Unfortunately, it is not a task that can or should be assigned to the ordinary Christian. It is important to draw a distinction between the task of translation and the everyday action of reading for meaning. These two things tend to be confused by the idea that one has to find a way to get behind the text to discover its hidden meaning. In so far as a believer bases her confidence in some more or less hidden intention that lies behind the text, she is put back into the medieval position of receiving the message from the priest. The priesthood of all believers has disappeared, and one is left again waiting for the high priest of biblical scholarship to reveal the truth. The biblical scholar certainly ought to deliver us a trustworthy text, but she ought not deliver us the meaning of the text. Translation is a technical task. Understanding words is an everyday task.

Neither of these approaches leads to confidence by the lay Bible reader. The church needs an authentic, nontechnical, serious way to read the Bible. The history of missions is replete with stories of those who have come to Christ by a chance copy of the Gospels. It is hard to believe the text does not pretty much bare its central message on its sleeve. We need to regain confidence in the message contained in the plain meaning of the text.

Marion Deckert is a member of Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, Kan.

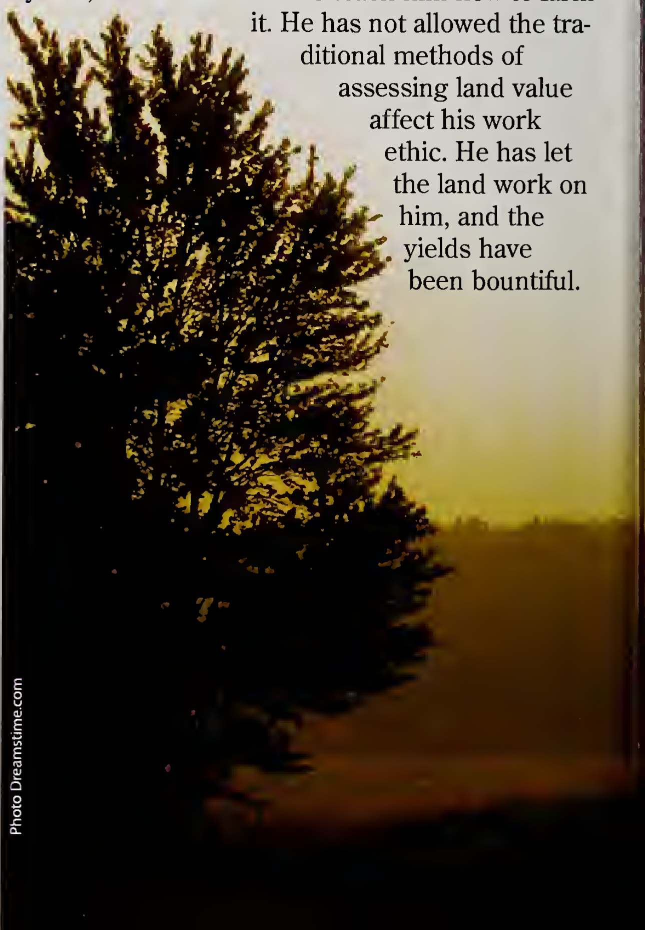
A farm

by Dave Nickel

My dad owns an 80-acre plot of land that we call the "Delft 80." It's a small field 13 miles from the home place. When I was younger, we had a tractor that reached 15 miles per hour on the road. I made the seemingly endless drive countless times and wondered why Dad had not sold the land. As I sat and sweated on the vinyl tractor seat, I thought to myself, Dad should sell. He should buy something closer to home.

The Delft 80 is hilly, and rocks abound. Usually such ground wreaks havoc on farm machinery and doesn't produce bountiful yields. But the Delft 80 is different. Late in the summer, the rolling hills of tasseling corn have an elegant mystique. More practically speaking, it is fertile. In Dad's words, "It produces good corn."

Why does the Delft 80 produce good corn? Why does Dad hang on to it, making the monotonous drive numerous times every season? Why does he deal with the hills and the rocks year after year? I'd like to say it is because he is a romantic, but that he is not. Instead, he is patient and, through studying the Delft 80 over the years, he has allowed it to teach him how to farm it. He has not allowed the traditional methods of assessing land value affect his work ethic. He has let the land work on him, and the yields have been bountiful.



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er's Bible

We need to allow the Bible to ask us questions.

Like the Delft 80, the soil of the Bible sometimes seems full of interpretive difficulties; it may even seem like worthless ground. According to one scholar, "Scripture is full of embarrassing, offensive and internally contradictory texts, texts we don't wish to live with, let alone live by." In the past, I have both overly denied and overly embraced this statement. Sometimes I read the Bible as an inerrant science book and other times as an inaccurate history book. Both readings were problematic; neither took Scripture seriously. In both I chose which passages were authoritative and discarded the rest. I was lazy and uncommitted. I was unwilling to read the Bible closely and wrestle with those passages that seemed to provide "inappropriate" messages. I clung to the flat, rock-free passages close to home. Unlike my wise and patient father, I let the traditional ways of evaluating land tell me to sell.

The Scriptures invite us to live in what Barth calls 'the strange, new world of God.'

More recently I have been introduced to the work of the late Swiss theologian Karl Barth. He teaches me that, instead of selling, I need to change my perspective. Instead of bringing my own questions to the text, Barth calls me to approach Scripture with a posture of humility. I need to allow the text to speak to me, to allow it to ask me questions about what I believe and how I live. The question is not how to get God to participate in my life; instead, reading the Bible pulls me into God's eternal life.

Barth proposes that our struggle with Scripture is how we join in what God is doing in our world. We penetrate into the heart of the text so that through the written words we may receive the Word of God, Jesus Christ, into our hearts. The Bible forms our spirits into a home for the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures invite us to live in what Barth calls "the strange, new world of God." As we dwell with God's Word, the Holy Spirit lifts us into the new world of God's incomprehensible love and glory. This is the message Barth finds in Scripture, but he goes on to write that his answers are only a weak attempt because they measure God with his own measure, conceive of God with his own conceptions and wish himself a God according to his own wishes. Barth calls us to grow beyond these weak, human answers to hear the Word present in Scripture.

The work of biblical interpretation is full of paradox and contradiction, but Barth points out that we do not engage in this work alone. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit. God graciously enables us to reach beyond ourselves. Barth challenges us to develop both understanding for this strange world and goodwill enough to meditate upon it and enter it. Such entry means a changed life; interpretation leads to a life of discipleship.

Despite their inconveniences, the Delft 80 and the Bible produce bountiful yields. The Delft 80 produces good corn, and the Bible produces good disciples. We do not need to change the Scriptures to meet our expectations; instead, we need to change our perspective. We need to navigate the interpretive difficulties with the hope that God will encounter us. We need to have faith that God has something to say to us, that God will change us through our reading and our wrestling. We must approach our Bibles with humility and patience.

Like my father, patiently and diligently working the soil of the Delft 80 and letting it teach him how to farm it, we need to work the soil of Scripture in the same manner, letting it teach us how to properly interpret it. We need to allow our lives to be shaped by how Scripture interprets us. We need to accept God's invitation to join in his story on his terms. Then Scripture will lead us into new life, eternal life, the life of Jesus Christ. Then we will find ourselves in the strange, new world of God. Then our reading of Scripture will bear fruit in our lives and in the church.

Dave Nickel served as a ministerial intern for the Eastern Carolina District (NC) of the Virginia Mennonite Conference.

We do not need to change the Scriptures to meet our expectations; instead, we need to change our perspective.

God or the Devil?

Ray Elvin Horst is a member of Community Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

A fellow believer said to me, "When we engage in dialogue, the Devil always wins." No Christian wants the Devil to win. Our faith is precious and so are the sacred writings that nurture it. Since any possibility of losing our faith strikes fear into our souls, we want to be cautious about questioning Bible-based and time-honored beliefs and practices.

Discussion of major faith issues in the church has often become impassioned, even heated. Let's briefly review the story, beginning in the Acts of the Apostles.

Discussion of major faith issues in the church has often become impassioned, even heated.

After Peter obeyed his divine vision, the church in Jerusalem called him on the carpet for eating with Cornelius, an unclean Gentile, "dirty" because he was uncircumcised. Active dialogue followed. As Jewish Christians peeled away layers of prejudice, they finally agreed that God was accepting "even the Gentiles." Henceforth, Jewish and Gentile believers could freely visit in each other's homes and eat together. In making this change, did the church gain or lose moral ground? Who won, God or the Devil?

A bit later, Paul narrowly escaped being lynched for teaching that circumcision was worthless ("availeth nothing," KJV). Through intense dialogue, the Jerusalem Council came to a new interpretation of God's commandment to circumcise boy babies: The church would not apply this mandate to Gentile believers. Eventually both Jewish and Gentile Christians stopped excising foreskins as a required rite of the faith, thus discarding the commandment. In this change, did God win, or did the Devil?

When Christians ceased stoning to death people guilty of adultery, thus disregarding another direct command from God, did the church lengthen or shorten the reach of God's forgiveness? Who won, God or the Devil?

Around 1525, disputations erupted in Switzerland as some Christians raised objections to infant baptism, the state church and participation in war. Neither side in that debate won a victory clear enough to convince all Christians, but the beliefs of the group first nicknamed "Anabaptists" and then "Mennonites" survived to challenge today's worldwide church. Was this a victory for God or for the Devil?

A century later, the church in Italy fought to hold the line on its Bible-based belief that the sun traveled around the earth. Fierce discussion and charges of heresy against Galileo eventually subsided as the church changed its interpretation of the Scriptures in light of new scientific evidence that the earth traveled around the sun. Did Christians thereby improve or damage our belief in the Creator? Did God win, or did the Devil?

In the United States around 1850, heated debate flared about sticking to the Bible concerning slavery. To slaveowners, Scripture was abundantly clear. In saying, "Slaves, be obedient to your masters," the Bible obviously approved the existence of both slaves and masters. When Christians eventually followed the lead of government, discarding that commandment in favor of the belief that holding humans in involuntary servitude was unacceptable, did we gain or lose moral ground? Who won, God or the Devil?

More recently, Mennonites debated passionately whether we should allow people "living in sin" (that is, divorced and remarried) to be members of the church. That discussion led to the belief that God's grace covers their situation. Rather than requiring a couple to sever the bonds of their second marriage, which in some cases meant separating parents from children, we now offer blended families full Christian fellowship. In making this change, did we increase or reduce our effectiveness in channeling God's grace to needy humans? Did God win, or did the Devil?

We are coming to see that God gives gifts for pastoral leadership to women as well as to men. We are reinterpreting Paul's command, "Let women keep silent in the churches," in light of his clear recognition of Lydia and Priscilla as leaders in the early church. In this process, is God winning or is the Devil?

Perhaps a look at our history can reduce our fear that in any dialogue about church practice the Devil will win. TM

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of *The Mennonite*, the board for The Mennonite, Inc., or Mennonite Church USA.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **God with us—and vice versa?**—Brian Martin Burkholder
- **Christmas economics**—Harvey Yoder

Two congregations unite after 86 years

Churches split in 1923 over issues of biblical interpretation, women's attire.

PASSION FOR PEACE
SPONSO
MIDDLEBURY PEACE CHURCHES

Rachel Nafziger Hartzler

Linda Pieri, of First Mennonite Church, and J.O. Yoder, of Pleasant Oaks Mennonite Church, work together in the Peace Booth at the Middlebury Summer Festival in 2008.

Pleasant Oaks Mennonite Church, Middlebury, Ind., met for its final Sunday morning worship service on Nov. 22. This was part of a historic event that happened in the small town of Middlebury. Two congregations that split 86 years ago—over specific issues no longer considered important—are in the process of reuniting.

The group of people who formed Warren Street Mennonite Church (which later became Pleasant Oaks Mennonite Church) left the Middlebury Mennonite Church (now First Mennonite Church of Middlebury) in 1923 over issues of biblical interpretation and reactions of bishops from the "Old" Mennonite Church to the fact that some members were becoming assimilated into the American culture of the early 20th century.

Locally, these reactions focused primarily on attire for women. In 1926 the Warren Street Mennonite Church became a member of the General Conference Mennonite Church, while the former First Mennonite remained a member of the Mennonite Church, sometimes referred to as "Old Mennonites."

For many years, the two groups coexisted in Middlebury with little interaction. They were part of two different continental denominations, and some members never set foot inside of the other church building. Gradually the two congregations began to work together in projects such as summer Bible school.

With the merging of the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church into Mennonite Church USA in 2002, the two Middlebury congregations joined efforts in more activities, such as annually working together on a peace booth at the Middlebury summer festival and a program for the International Day of Prayer for Peace.

With the recent decline in membership of both congregations, there have been occasional conversations between the two congregations about a reconnection. Formal conversations resumed in February and led to activities ranging from joint gatherings for worship, fellowship and prayer to a mixed octet of people from both congregations that has sung on numerous occasions. They also led to a joint presentation of "A Story of Reconciliation" by the lead pastors, Linford Martin of First Mennonite and Rachel Nafziger Hartzler of Pleasant Oaks, on Sept. 21—the International Day of Prayer for Peace—in the downtown Middlebury Memorial Park. In September and October, decisions were made to reunite and together become a new congregation. The legal issues involved in this reunion are being explored, but there is wide agreement that the two congregations should become a new merged entity. Some people are thinking about a new name for the reunited congregation. Although no formal action has been taken, one name suggestion for the new congregation is "First Pleasant Mennonite Church."

The reuniting process has been marked with pain for some of the longtime members of Pleasant Oaks, three of whom were present when the congregation began. Others have never attended another congregation, and there are numerous people who helped with the construction of the present church building.

> One name suggestion for the new congregation is "First Pleasant Mennonite Church."

The members of Pleasant Oaks celebrate that the thriving Pleasant Oaks Preschool will continue in the same location, as First Mennonite Church members have agreed to join in supporting this successful outreach program that is in its 39th year. In addition, Pleasant Oaks members have been listening carefully to each other's stories during the past eight months. They have been intentional about lamenting what they need to and celebrating what they can. Recent celebrations have included celebrating the 85th anniversary in 2008; the 90th birthday celebration of the oldest active member, J.O. Yoder; a celebration of marriages; and the baptism of Grant T. Miller, who became the first fifth-generation member of Pleasant Oaks.

Pleasant Oaks pastor Rachel Nafziger Hartzler will conclude her responsibilities on Nov. 22 but has been granted a six-week sabbatical to complete the writing of the history of Pleasant Oaks Mennonite Church.—*Pleasant Oaks Mennonite Church*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

MWC Assembly ends with leftover funds

Mennonite World Conference officers discuss finances, future assemblies.

Mennonite World Conference officers tackled a full agenda at meetings held in St. Jacobs, Ontario, Nov. 2-4. This was their first meeting since Assembly 15 in Paraguay last July. New at the table were vice president Janet Plenert (Canada) and treasurer Ernst Bergen (Paraguay).

Paraguay 2009 finances

MWC's postassembly financial status, according to Oct. 31 closing figures, is positive, with a balance of $325,340 in the Assembly Fund. Miller attributed this result to strong international registration, donations from Paraguayan Mennonites and careful cost control by staff. Officers decided to set aside $125,340 of the balance for costs related to preparing for the next assembly and to give a $50,000 gift to Paraguayan member churches in gratitude for their great hospitality in hosting.

Officers reserved an additional $150,000 for use in building the capacity of the Africa, Asia and Latin America continental caucuses and the development of MWC representation in each continent. Assembly offerings totaled $27,824 and have been placed in the Global Church Sharing Fund.

We need to address our stereotypical treatment of Lutherans and our continuing sense of victimization.
—Larry Miller

Future assemblies

Discussion around future assemblies continues to percolate. There is anxiety in some quarters about holding assemblies less frequently, officers noted. Miller proposed consideration of three possible options: keep the current pattern (every six years); gather every nine years; or every eight years, with General Council meetings every four instead of every three years. Continental meetings could be held in intervening years. It was agreed to complete by May 31, 2010, a comparative cost analysis of all meeting options as called for previously by the "Future of Assemblies" Task Group. Officers will then make a recommendation for deliberation by the Executive Committee at its meeting in July 2010.

Deacons commission

Bert Lobe reported that Global Anabaptists Deacons will be in place in about four months. Lobe is the staff person for the new Deacons Commission, which is designed to respond to needs in the global church.

Deacons Commission members from each continental region are proposing names to complete the lists. Deacons, who will serve for three-year terms, are called to listen and be proactive in their own continental regions when there are issues to address.

Interchurch relations

Officers heard that the International Lutheran Council has shown interest in joining the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in asking forgiveness of Mennonites for the 16th-century Lutheran persecution of Anabaptists.

The LWF will act on a recommendation at its assembly in July 2010. The recommendation comes as a result of discussions between MWC and LWF officials since 2002.

"In the spirit of biblical forgiveness, it is important that we offer forgiveness when asked," said Bergen. The goal is mutual forgiveness, Miller added. "We need to address our stereotypical treatment of Lutherans and our continuing sense of victimization."

Officers affirmed the proposal of the Mennonite members of the International Study Commission to send the commission's joint report to member churches for discussion and response.

A letter asking for feedback could go with the report, to be sent out in January 2010, said Miller. Officers agreed that MWC needs to be ready to offer forgiveness to the Lutherans when asked to do so.

Officers also affirmed undertaking further dialogue and discernment of issues raised by the joint report, especially regarding baptism and church-and-state relations. Plans for such conversations will be made in consultation with MWC's Faith and Life Commission and recommended to the Executive Committee for approval.

Service consultation

In 2006, MWC facilitated a service consultation in Pasadena, Calif., in conjunction with General Council meetings. A second consultation, proposed at that first gathering of representatives of service agencies, is now being planned. Pakisa Tshimika serves as staff leader for the consultation. Reg and Phyllis Toews from Winnipeg, Manitoba, will work with Tshimika on the consultation.

Questions to be discussed include, How do churches deal with service issues? and, How do service organizations and committees work with churches? The consultation is tentatively scheduled for Aug. 6-8, 2010, immediately following MWC Executive Committee meetings in east Africa.

The Executive Committee will meet July 28-Aug. 4, 2010, either in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, or Nairobi, Kenya.—*Ferne Burkhart of Mennonite World Conference*

EMU theater to honor Lee Eshleman

$250,000 needed to establish studio theater named for late actor

A new studio theater at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., will be named in honor of artist and actor Lee E. Eshleman, a 1986 graduate of EMU.

Funding of $250,000 is needed to establish the Lee E. Eshleman Studio Theater as part of the University Commons Phase II project. Eventually a small gallery at the theater entrance will showcase some of Lee's artwork and photographs of his life on stage.

Lee took his life at age 45 in the spring of 2007, after a lengthy struggle with bipolar disorder.

EMU is raising $2.4 million to complete the second phase of the University Commons building; $1.9 million has already been committed. The project plans include renovation of the former gymnasium to create upgraded state-of-the-art facilities for EMU's popular visual and communication arts program as well as theater department.

More than $100,000 has already been committed by family and friends to the project. EMU now invites the support of the broader community of many individuals who have been enriched by Lee's life and work.

Lee was the last student to graduate with a degree from EMU's art program in 1986, when the program was temporarily suspended. After graduating, he worked in the school print shop and as a graphic designer for EMU.

Former EMU professor Jerry Lapp recalls discussing the "knowing line" concept with Lee.

"A knowing line was what Lee was good at," Lapp says. "He captured particulars and peculiarities in animals, humans or objects rendered that caused one to stop and gaze, ponder, chuckle. The knowing line Lee rendered created a two-dimensional reality which we, as viewer, could so easily imagine into our own realities, outer or inner."

Lee began his stage career at EMU as well.

"Lee had the kind of creative genius that takes your breath away," says Barbra Graber, former EMU theater faculty member.

"Lee wasn't afraid to take his fear and pain on stage with him," says Graber, who worked with Lee as a student, as a designer and as an actor in Theater AKIMBO from 1991 to 1998. "But he also wasn't afraid to let that Divine Comedian morph into something else, something magnificent, poignant, deeply truthful and so very funny."

Thousands mourned his passing, having been touched by his wit, humor and creativity onstage through performances as half of the comedy duo Ted & Lee Theaterworks.

Lee Eshleman took his life at age 45 in the spring of 2007 after struggling with bipolar disorder.

Lee joined Ted Swartz, Eastern Mennonite Seminary graduate, to form the theater company in 1987. They performed across the country and around the world in church, school, camp and community theater settings, bringing fresh light and humor to the gospel message.

"It's hard to say how much Lee meant to me," says Swartz. "He was my comedic and theatrical soul mate as well as a great friend. We grew as artists together, and Lee taught me much about humor, about word choice, about clarity of objective. But he also made me laugh more than anyone before or since. It was a great gift, not a flippant or incidental thing, the ability to make another laugh, but rather an ultimate gift. He was also not shy about tackling and wrestling to the ground his own pain and struggle, giving his work depth and color."

Lee was not shy about tackling and wrestling to the ground his own pain and struggle.
—Ted Swartz

"Lee understood that great art is also embracing the simple. A simple line in drawing, a simple line in acting, a simple line in writing," Swartz says. "Despite a great intellect, he relished in the small, seemingly silly exchange, which of course communicated great meaning."

Contributions of any amount are welcome. The names of donors who contribute $500 or more will appear on a plaque in the theater gallery. For information, go to www.emu.edu/studiotheater.—*Jim Bishop of Eastern Mennonite University*

Couple brings service home to Goshen

Masts return from Paraguay and look for ways to use Spanish around them.

Photo provided

From left, Craig Mast, Berta Valdez and Krista Mast. Valdez was the Masts' host mother during the year they spent in Paraguay.

Craig and Krista Mast wanted to improve their Spanish skills. They also wanted to serve in another country. So instead of going to language school, they combined their desire to grow more fluent with their interest in service and joined a Radical Journey team on a 10-month adventure in Paraguay.

Radical Journey is a year-long service program of Mennonite Mission Network. Participants spend a month of orientation in a North American city, 10 months in an international service location and another month in reorientation with their home congregations.

As a teacher and a nurse in Goshen, Ind., the Masts regularly found themselves interacting with people who spoke only Spanish. As they tried to make connections with their limited language skills, both wished there was something more they could do.

Stripped of the two things that make me who I am, it was a real challenge to find out what I had to offer.—Krista Mast

"We really felt like there needed to be more [English speakers] in the community who connect with the Spanish-speaking population," says Krista Mast. "We wanted to reach out to the community in a different way."

"Each year, Radical Journey sends teams of young adults to explore what God is doing in the world and to take initiative to get involved," says Darrell Gascho, Radical Journey's director. "We're excited to see how participants like Krista and Craig engage in the experience and integrate that experience back into their home community."

The time in Paraguay was a growing experience especially for Krista, who thought of herself as "awkwardly conversational" in Spanish before leaving the United States but found herself often excluded from conversations once arriving in Paraguay.

"I couldn't communicate and couldn't practice my passion: nursing. Stripped of the two things that make me who I am, it was a real challenge to find out what I had to offer," she says. Mast credits her stubbornness with helping her gain fluency. "I had to practice being present in every conversation without speaking."

While in Paraguay, the Masts' main assignment was teaching English to Spanish-speaking adults who had interest in volunteering for the Mennonite World Conference Assembly Gathered. The Masts worked in concert with the rest of the young adults on their Radical Journey team and spent a lot of time with their host family.

"I grew in my understanding of who our neighbors are," says Krista. "Our host mother, Berta [Valdez], was the mom of the neighborhood. If there was a neighbor who needed a hot meal, she would give that meal. There was a sense of community that [went] beyond church community, a sense of community with your neighbors."

Since their return to Goshen four months ago, the Masts have been working to put their Spanish-language skills and their new neighborhood focus into practice. Craig is using his Spanish at school, translating for parent-teacher conferences and letters that go home to parents. Krista has returned to nursing, looking for new ways to communicate with her patients.

Both of them are making time to share with the people around them.

"Coming back, I have made a special effort to connect with my neighbors," says Krista. "I've been trying to find out who they are as people."

The Masts have bigger dreams, too. "One of my real goals is still in the dream stage," says Krista. "How can I as a nurse and as a Christian find a way to empower the people that need assistance in our community? How can I be an advocate?"

Gascho sees the Masts' community participation as part of the mission of Radical Journey. "It's wonderful to see how Craig and Krista have embraced the call to bring their faith into their life and to connect their gifts with what God is doing in the world," he says.—*Melanie Hess of Mennonite Mission Network*

EMM immigrant church bridges gaps

Church incorporates traditional Amharic worship songs and English songs.

"For two years we were praying and asking everyone we could think of for help with our children and youth ministries," says Tsadik Abraham, lead elder for the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, a member of the Baltimore District of Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference.

It wasn't just that they needed Sunday school teachers. They had plenty of capable Ethiopian men and women.

But as an immigrant church, Abraham says, the adults in the church knew that their children were growing up in a world vastly different from the one that had shaped them. There's always a generation gap, but for new immigrants the gap is unusually wide.

Ethiopian adults prefer the traditional pentatonic Amharic worship songs. They love to hear the familiar words of the Amharic Scriptures in their mother tongue.

But many of their children, born in the United States, don't even speak Amharic. They go to English language schools. So when children come to church on Sunday, they want to read from English Bibles and sing English songs.

A year ago, the Ethiopian church approached Terrie and Roy Graham, empty nesters who had years of experience in children's ministries at a nearby Assemblies of God congregation. Would they consider assisting the church?

"How could you say no to an Ethiopian?" Roy says. "Philip [in the Bible] couldn't, and neither could we."

The Grahams joined the Ethiopian Mennonite church and have been volunteering their time to minister to the Ethiopian-American children. While the adults worship upstairs, the Grahams teach songs and Scripture memorization, tell stories and organize craft projects for around 20 children in the congregation.

But each Sunday before they head to the basement for their separate classes in English, the children share the songs and Scriptures they are learning with the adults in a miniature program.

"This is an important way of keeping the generations in touch with each other spiritually," says Tilahun Beyene, an Ethiopian leader from a neighboring congregation. "We do the same thing with the children in our congregation."

Planted with assistance from EMM more than a decade ago, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church has had its ups and downs, but Abraham is encouraged.

"It's easy in this society for our children and youth to get drawn into unwholesome things that we're not even aware of," Abraham says. "We deeply appreciate the help we're getting from the broader church."—*Jewel Showalter of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

Jewel Showalter

Tsadik Abraham (far left) watches as the children of the congregation give a program.

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Groff's dissertation still relevant today

Books finds similarities between Gandhi and Mennonite nonresistance.

Mary E. Klassen

Ginny Martin, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary development officer, talks with Weyburn Groff about his dissertation.

The doctoral dissertation *Satyagraha and Nonresistance: A Comparative Study of Gandhian and Mennonite Nonviolence* by Weyburn W. Groff, broke new ground in 1963. It continues to provide fresh insights for today.

The book has been published this fall by the Institute of Mennonite Studies and Herald Press. It was released at a celebration honoring Weyburn and Thelma, his wife, on Nov. 6 at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

Groff's dissertation had been set aside while he served on the faculty and administration of Goshen Biblical Seminary (part of the seminary) from 1965 to 1986.

However, in spite of the fact that only three copies existed until now, *Satyagraha and Nonresistance* serves as a challenge that urges us forward in 2009, John Rempel, associate director of IMS, said.

Weyburn and Thelma worked in India for almost 20 years under Mennonite Board of Missions, and for most of that time—1951 to 1964—Weyburn taught at Union Biblical Seminary in Yavatmal.

Confronted with how vast the problems of poverty, intolerance and war were, Groff explored the beliefs of Gandhi and the ways Martin Luther King Jr. merged those beliefs with his Christian faith.

Groff was aware that one tendency for Mennonites was to withdraw from problems that required political engagement, Rempel explained. Another tendency was the lack of a Mennonite technique for implementing alternatives to violence.

So in the dissertation, completed for his Ph.D. from New York University in 1963, Groff examined pacifist literature in the East and West, then described the spirituality and practice of Gandhi's belief and compared these with historic Mennonite nonresistance.

"Without ignoring foundational differences of piety and doctrine between Christianity and Hinduism," said Rempel, "Weyburn made a powerful plea for them to recognize commonalities and shared responsibility. It is hard to overstate the radicality of such a plea for social engagement by a representative of a Mennonite church institution in 1963."

John Paul Lederach, a Mennonite mediator who has worked in numerous international settings, wrote in his foreword that this book "is well worth turning to in our continued discernment, for nuclear issues remain at the top of our global challenges, our neighbors are global, no matter where we live, and the world continues to need prophetic and pastoral expressions of agape-love."

The book breaks ground in a more pragmatic way also.

This is the first project that IMS is offering as an e-book as well as in print volumes.

Information is available on the IMS Web site: www.ambs.edu/ims.—*Mary E. Klassen of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary*

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MCC U.S. leader to leave after term ends

Santiago wants to leave 'space for new leadership to grow seeds of change.'

Rolando Santiago

Rolando Santiago has decided to leave Mennonite Central Committee U.S. when his six-year term as executive director is complete in August 2010. He says he hopes to create space for new leadership within MCC.

MCC U.S. is part of the process to re-envision MCC's future through the New Wine/New Wineskins process. The MCC boards in the United States are working to streamline decision-making and increased coordination.

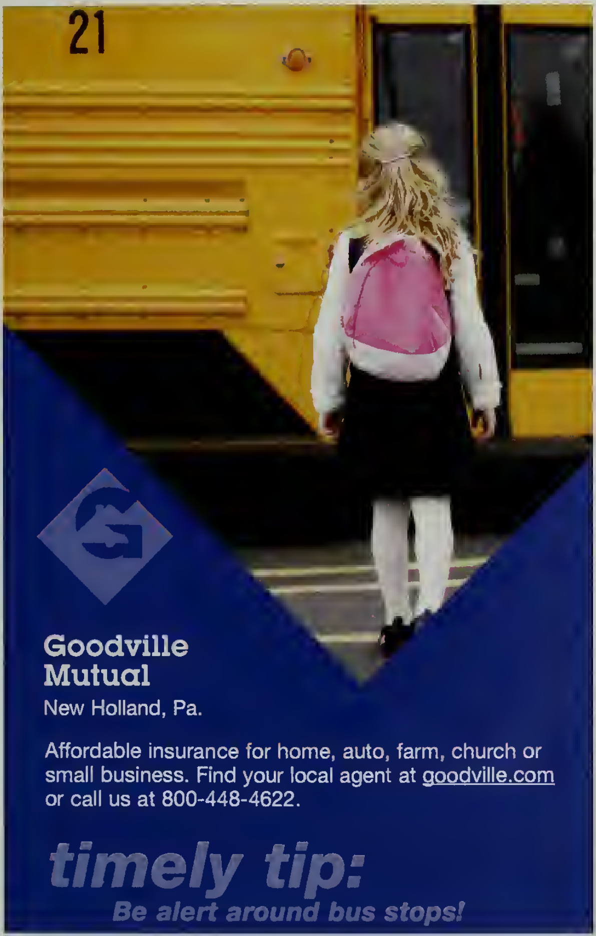
Santiago, who has been instrumental in that process, says, "In the midst of organizational changes in MCC U.S. that the board and I have been planning over the last three years, it is important to create space for new leadership to grow the seeds of change." He plans to pursue new opportunities in peacebuilding, intercultural leadership, public health and education.

Ann Graber Hershberger says that in his tenure, "Rolando has defined intercultural leadership, built denominational relationships and heightened witness to government." Graber Hershberger, chair of MCC U.S., notes that MCC U.S. is moving into the future as a strong organization. Regional and national staff have strengthened Summer Service Worker and Church Community Worker programs with immigrant and people of color churches.

The Washington Office has developed new Web initiatives and tools that broaden its reach in Christian advocacy. Regional and national program offices are creating strong links to partners and constituents through community accountability and reference groups.

Graber Hershberger says a transitional leadership search committee has been named by the board and includes Leonard Dow of Philadelphia, MCC U.S. board vice chair; Gwen White of Philadelphia, who represents the Brethren in Christ Church of North America on the MCC U.S. board; and Ron Byler of Goshen, Ind., who represents Mennonite Church USA on the board.

"This is an exciting time for MCC U.S. and all of MCC. We must continue to reinvent our beloved organization to remain relevant and cutting-edge in our mission of peace, development and relief in the name of Christ," says Graber Hershberger.
—*MCC and MCC U.S. staff*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WDC serves Low German Mennonites

Kansas Farmworker Program reaches about 4,000 LGM clients per year.

The Low German Mennonites from Mexico Support Task Force will mark its sixth anniversary in January 2010. Western District Conference sponsors the task force.

"Not often are 'low German' and 'missional' used in the same sentence," says chairperson Willmar Harder. "But the task force combines both in an innovational and cutting-edge ministry."

Harder is pastor of Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church in Inman, Kan.

The task force continues to partner with the Kansas Statewide Farmworker Health Program—a program of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. The program reaches about 4,000 Low German Mennonite (LGM) clients per year. These LGMs tend to be Old Colony Mennonites who migrated from Canada to Mexico in the mid-1920s. Many left because of Canadian nationalism at that time that limited their educational freedoms, among other reasons. Most maintained Canadian citizenship and travel extensively between Mexico and Canada.

Later generations of these LGM families left Mexico due to the economy, land shortages and drought, says Harder, and moved to Kansas, Texas and other states. Many of these places were on the routes from Mexico to Canada, so LGMs made job connections there. The school systems in Kansas noticed the large population of LGM children and worked to connect them to other Anabaptist groups, Bethel College in North Newton and others in Newton. The task force of 11 people grew out of these efforts.

Mennonite Central Committee Canada has an LGM ministry based in Steinbach, Manitoba. The task force uses MCC's statement: "MCC seeks to share God's love with LGM people by working in a mutually beneficial relationship with local leaders, communities and organizations to enhance their capacity to address such issues as poverty, conflict, literacy, health and natural disasters."

MCC names three goals: improve the literacy of people in LGM communities, provide resources for community-building projects and coordinate a hemispheric approach in programs with LGM people. The WDC task force added a fourth goal, "to share our common spiritual background and faith."—*Anna Groff*

> Not often are 'low German' and 'missional' used in the same sentence.
> —Willmar Harder

RESOURCES

Dostoevsky: Language, Faith and Fiction by Rowan Williams (Baylor University Press, 2009, $24.95) explores the intracacies of speech, fiction, metaphor and iconography in the works of one of literature's most complex and more misunderstood authors.

Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies by Marilyn Chandler McEntyre (Eerdmans, 2009, $18) counters the commercial and political forces that affect language use in American culture with 12 constructive "strategies of stewardship."

No Gods but One by Daniel Berrigan (Eerdmans, 2009, $15) looks at the darker side of Deuteronomy and draws parallels between that book's time of mingled triumph and broken law and our own time, uncovering the stories within the story of this complex biblical book.

Just One More Day: Meditations for Those Who Struggle with Anxiety and Depression by Beverlee Buller Keck (Kindred Press, 2009, $19.95) draws on the author's personal experiences and Scripture in 40 short chapters.

Living in Hope While Living in Babylon: The Christian Anarchists of the 20th Century by Tripp York (The Lutterworth Press, 2009, $17) examines a few Christians whose loyalty to Christ undermined the pseudo-soteriological myth employed by the state. These include the Berrigan brothers, Dorothy Day and Eberhard Arnold.

The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth by Thomas Berry (Orbis, 2009, $22) reflects on Christianity and the environmental crisis of our time. He presents a vision of the sacredness of the universe and the interrelatedness of the Earth community.

Ostriches, Dung Beetles and Other Spiritual Masters: A Book of Wisdom from the Wild by Janice McLaughlin (Orbis, 2009, $18) uses stories to tell about the wildlife of Africa and teach us about ourselves and what we are capable of.

Christ Our Companion: Toward a Theological Aesthetics of Liberation by Roberto S. Goizueta (Orbis, 2009, $30) addresses the dissonance between the truth of Christ's life, death and resurrection as the universal key to human meaning and our increased consciousness of our diverse, pluralistic world. The answer for Christians is to embody through everyday actions Christ's claim to be the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Hope in an Age of Despair by Albert Nolan (Orbis, 2009, $18) outlines the basis of a theology and spirituality that sides with the poor and the cause of justice. Many of the pieces in the book were forged in the struggle against the apartheid system of South Africa.

Befriending Death: Henri Nouwen and a Spirituality of Dying by Michelle O'Rourke (Orbis, 2009, $18) presents Nouwen's reflections on death and dying—a theme that stands out as one of the unifying threads in all his books.

Trails of Hope and Terror: Testimonies on Immigration by Miguel A. De La Torre (Orbis, 2009, $20) examines an issue (borders, economics, myths, family values, the politics of fear, perspectives and ethical responses) and includes stories or testimonies by undocumented migrants and those who work with the undocumented.

Empowring the Patient: How to Reduce the Cost of Healthcare and Improve Its Quality by Glen E. Miller (Dog Ear Publishing, 2009, $14.95) presents dilemmas patients face in the health-care system and how to join in a partnership with one's doctor, decrease costs and improve care.

WORKERS

Harder, Ruth R., was ordained at Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, Kan., on Sept. 27.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Bontrager, Garrett Ray, Oct. 30, to Billy and Cindy Boller Bontrager, Wellman, Iowa.

Devlin, Alexander Demian, Nov. 13, to Greg Devlin and Natalia Terekhova, Denver, Colo.

Flores Schmidt, Mateo Sebastian, Oct. 2, to Gilberto and Alison Schmidt Flores, Kansas City, Kan.

Froese, Iain Isaiah, Oct. 24, to Tim and Charlotte Loewen Froese, Goshen, Ind.

Goerzen, Oliver Matthew, July 9, to John and Terah Yoder Goerzen, Newton, Kan.

Hershey, Avella Seven-Rain, Oct. 6, to Jason and Kimberlee Hershey, Washington, D.C.

Lusby, Clint Samuel, Oct. 23, to Joseph and Kristen Kauffman Lusby, Atglen, Pa.

Miller, Lenox Charles, Oct. 4, to Kyle and Carleen Perez Miller, Wellman, Iowa.

Miller Yoder, Silas Emerson, Nov. 1, to Brad Miller and Jessica Yoder, Englewood, Colo.

Showalter, Jillian Kaye, Nov. 10, to Hollins and Rachel Stuckey Showalter, Indianapolis, Ind.

MARRIAGES

Briggs/Kautz: John Briggs, Rockhill, S.C., and Christel Kautz, Millersville, Pa., Oct. 24, at Millersville Mennonite Church.

Brunk/Everett: Timothy Brunk, Dowingtown, Pa., and Meredith Everett, Strasburg, Pa., Sept. 5, at Hershey Mennonite Church, Kinzers, Pa.

Fougeron/Neihardt: Tosha Fougeron, Milford, Neb., and Jeff Neihardt, Milford, Nov. 7, at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

Gibbs/Krabill: Megan Gibbs, Princeton, Ill., and Andy Krabill, Tiskilwa, Ill., Sept. 5, at Shallowbrook Farm, Bradford, Ill.

DEATHS

Escher, Brandon M., 22, Kalona, Iowa, died Nov. 8 of heart problems. Parents: Michael and Beth Marner Escher. Siblings: Chelsea Escher, Zach. Funeral: Nov. 12 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Harman, Frances Elizabeth Suter, 93, Harrisonburg, Va., died Nov. 7. Spouse: Frank T. Harman (deceased). Parents: J. Early and Pearl Blosser Suter. Children: Orden, Carl, Harriet Steiner; six grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 11 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Kaufman, Margaret Amelia Shetler, 100, Davidsville, Pa., died Oct. 18 of a subarachnoid hemorrhage sustained in a fall. Spouse: Calvin E. Kaufman (deceased). Parents: Samuel G. and Maggie Jane Kaufman Shetler. Children: Melvin, Lorene Saylor, Marvin, Gerald, Rhonda Blough; 15 grandchildren; 38 great-grandchildren; seven great-great grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 21 at Carpenter Park Mennonite Church, Davidsville.

Styer, E. Kermit, 87, Souderton, Pa., died Oct. 4 of pneumonia. Spouse: Edna B. Benner Styer (deceased). Parents: Edwin R. and Marian Ruth Styer. Children: James, John, Alan, Mary Schrock, Lois Halsel; 12 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 9 at Souderton Mennonite Church.

Voth, Frances Louise Funk, 81, Newton, Kan., died Sept. 26. Spouse: Orville Voth (deceased). Parents: Gerhard "George" R. and Marie Funk. Children: Coleen Steussy, Bryson, Jody Fensky, Lyndell; seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 30 at Tabor Mennonite Church, Marion County, Kan.

Yoder, Cordell Swartzendruber, 91, Kalona, Iowa, died Nov. 5. Spouse: Rolland M. Yoder (deceased). Parents: Mahlon and Barbara Hershberger Swartzendruber. Children: Donald G., Doug, Linford, Ronald; 13 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 9 at Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church, Kalona.

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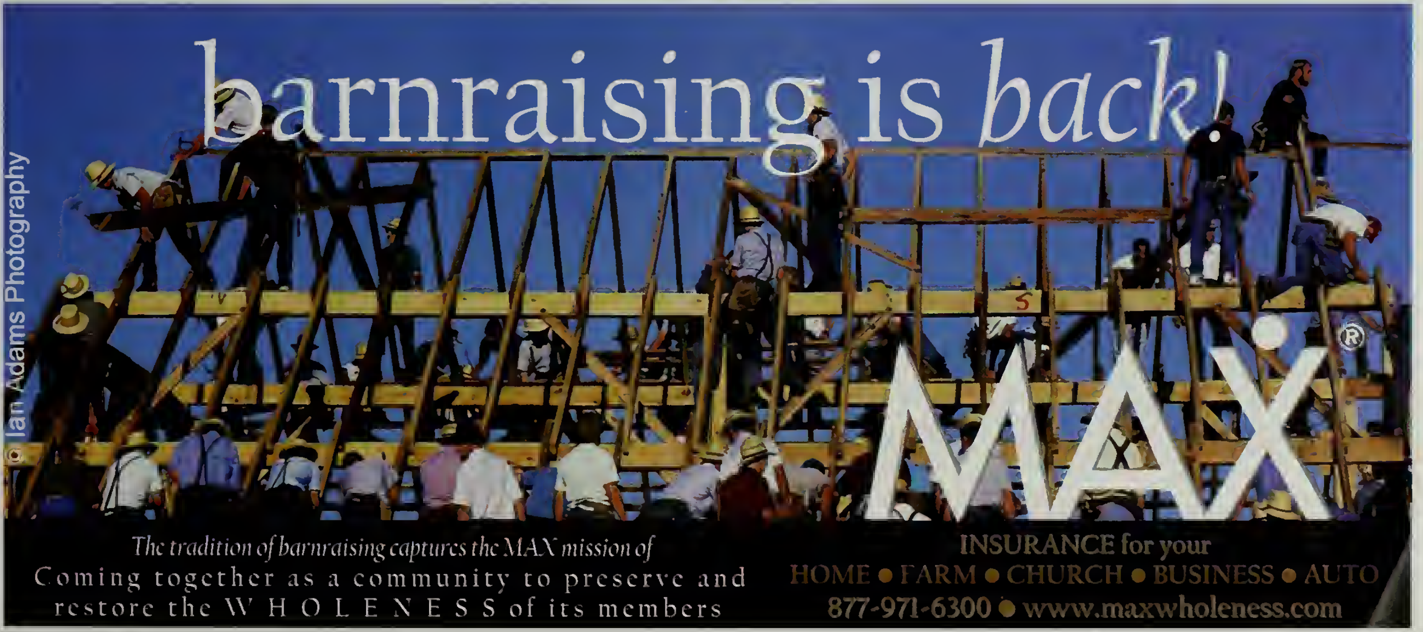

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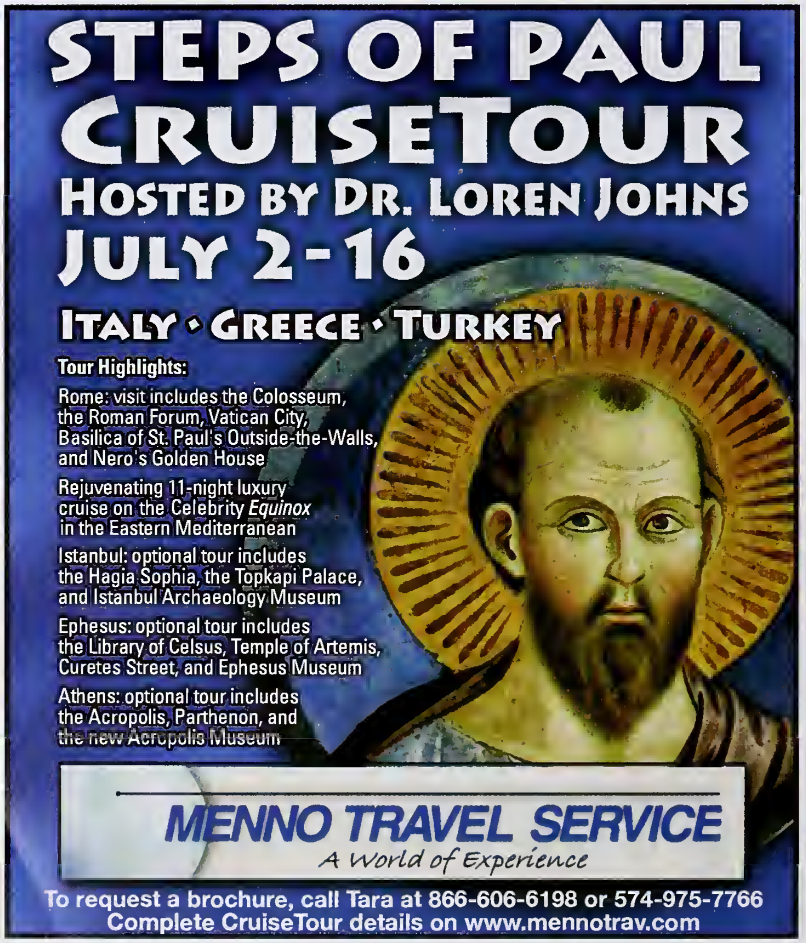
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Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee seeks an ***archivist*** to lead its Goshen, Ind., archives. The archivist is responsible for acquiring, preserving and making accessible archival collections related to Mennonite Church USA. Job description and qualifications can be found at www.mennoniteusa.org/jobs or contact the Historical Committee at archives@mennoniteusa.org or 574-523-3080. To apply, email a cover letter, resumé/vita and three references to the above address or mail to Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526. Consideration of applications will begin Jan. 4, 2010. The Historical Committee is an equal opportunity employer and encourages women and racial/ethnic people to apply.

Men's retreat, Jan. 14-15, 2010, at **Spruce Lake Retreat** (Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania) with speaker John Fischer and praise-and-worship artists Next 2 Nothing: a short but powerful event that could easily be life-changing! Invite your church or community men's group and call 800-822-7505 for reservations. www.sprucelake.org.

Western District Conference, with offices in North Newton, Kan., invites applications for the full-time position of ***conference minister***. As primary administrative officer and head of staff, this person will provide leadership to the conference's mission, ministry and well-being. Experience in pastoral ministry and a Master of Divinity degree (or its equivalent) are required. More information is available on the WDC Web site. Position begins June 15, 2010. Apply with letter of application and completed MLI to Tom Harder, search committee chair, at tom.harder@lorraineavenue.org, no later than **Dec. 31, 2009**.

New obituary policy

Beginning with the January 2010 issue of *The Mennonite*, additional information may be published in the obituary section. The following information will be free:

- Name of deceased
- Age at death
- Hometown and state
- Cause of death
- Name(s) of spouse(s)
- Name(s) of parent(s)
- Name(s) of child(ren)
- Number of grandchildren
- Number of great-grandchildren
- Number of great-great-grandchildren
- Location and date of funeral

Additional information may be added at the usual rate for classified ads. This is currently $1.30 per word. A photograph may be added for $25. To submit this additional information: download the Word document from www.themennonite.org, email obituaries@themennonite.org to receive an electronic copy of the form, or call 800-790-2498 to receive a copy in the mail.

The Mennonite reserves the right to edit obituaries for length and clarity.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email Advertising@TheMennonite.org.

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What's in a name?

Regina Shands Stoltzfus is working on a doctorate in theology and ethics at Chicago Theological Seminary.

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you … when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned.—Isaiah 43:1,2

My mother tells the story of selecting my name many years before I was born, when she was still a girl herself. There was a period of time when she and a best friend pledged to name their future daughters after one another, but when mother actually had a daughter—me—she went back to the name she picked for me when she was still a girl herself. It is one of the reasons I have always loved my name. It was chosen with care and given to me by someone who dreamed of me long before I came along.

Naming is one of the most significant acts we humans experience, and I love to hear and tell stories about naming. In the classroom, I enjoy having students participate in a simple activity that revolves around their names. This is part of the ritual of us getting to know one another.

A few days before the class meets for the first time, I contact students and ask them to come to class prepared to tell a story about their name—what it means, whether they were named for a relative or other significant person, how and what kind of nicknames evolve from their proper name. I am always amazed at the wealth of stories that come about—lots of them happy and even silly, some of them sad, many of them funny.

Naming is one of the most significant acts we humans experience. This is part of the ritual of us getting to know one another.

Together we learn more about each person as an individual but also something about families, our larger multiethnic context and the social/cultural/political histories that are wrapped up in our naming stories. Some students are able to tell the stories of how their first names were chosen and also give a history of their last name—what it means, where it came from, how it has been changed and altered, and to whom it is connected. And some students don't have all that history to draw upon.

Some names get changed during the process of immigrating to a new place; a name misspelled or "Americanized." A new phase in life can cause an entirely new name to be taken. Couples marry, and one spouse takes the name of the other—or not; sometimes an altogether new family name is chosen. Expectant parents and family members pore over lists of baby names in order to select just the right one.

One family I know had naming and blessing ceremonies for each of their children; the names chosen for them were not divulged to friends and family until the time of the blessing. Some families wait until they meet the baby or change a name that was previously selected upon the infant's arrival.

We thought we had settled upon our last child's name several months before he was born. Shortly before the birth, another name seemed more suited for him and so he was given the name Joshua. Several weeks later we realized we'd left out a step when our 4-year-old daughter looked up and asked, "Hey, where's Isaac?"

Many years ago, Nina Simone recorded a song that says simply, "I told Jesus it would be all right if he changed my name." The song speaks of a willingness to be brought into a new reality, a new phase of life that doesn't happen because of a name change but is signified by the new name. In the song, Jesus tells the singer, "You may go hungry, and people may hate you … if your name is changed." But the refrain comes back, "I told Jesus it would be all right if he changed my name." Like the arrival of a new baby, our encounters with the divine open the possibility of new life—again and again and again.

God is the one who has initiated the naming process. Through raging waters and fire, God calls us by name and accompanies us on our journeys. I love the story of my mother choosing my name because it tells me she thought of me—dreamed of me—long before I came along. She imagined me into her life and future, much like our Creator has imagined and dwells with all of us. TM

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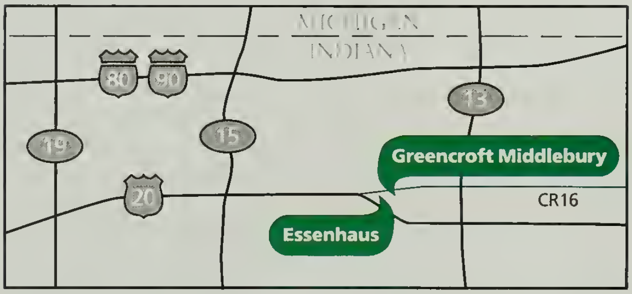
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Gordon Houser

Peace through tourism

We all carry within us prejudices toward others, especially those most different from us. One corrective to such prejudice is actually meeting those people where they live.

Many Mennonites have lived in other countries, and many more have traveled there. Our colleges encourage the experience of other cultures and learning other languages. This experience has helped shape our views of the world and of God's work in the world, including God's desire for peace (shalom) throughout the globe.

Nevertheless, those of us in the United States are affected by our country's prejudices toward other countries and cultures. Our media often reinforces such prejudice. And our mostly monolingual experience doesn't help. We all need a dose of humility and a broadening of our perspective.

In these lean economic times, I had the good fortune to experience both this year, thanks to funding from Meetinghouse and the Jordan Tourism Board. I traveled to Paraguay in July to attend and report on Assembly 15 of Mennonite World Conference, then to Jordan Sept. 26-Oct. 3 with 17 other Christian journalists. (See my report on the Jordan trip on page 8.)

Peace comes through meeting others on their turf and learning from them.

My experience in Paraguay enriched me in many ways. Meeting people from all over the world who shared my basic Mennonite beliefs filled me with awe and gratitude. I saw in new ways that people experience God in different ways, depending on the context of their lives.

I also experienced the isolation of not knowing the native language. I've studied Spanish and got by on some basic knowledge, but I found out my ability was minimal. I welcomed the gracious patience of others with my limitation. I also felt greater sympathy toward Spanish speakers at our various Mennonite Church USA meetings who must endure English-only sessions.

In Jordan I experienced the gracious hospitality that is a mark of Middle Eastern culture. While I knew almost no Arabic, many of my hosts spoke English well and put up with my ignorance without complaint.

As I note on page 8, many among my friends and family said before I left, "Is it safe there?" They—all of us—are inundated with media that focus on "terrorist" activity and equate it with Islamic faith. Our media fail to report the repeated denunciations by Muslims across the globe of suicide bombers and honor killings. And the actions of Israel, the United States and others are never labeled "terrorist," though the bombings and killings terrify many people.

Jordan promotes not just tolerance but acceptance of religion, according to Senator Akel Biltaji (see page 10). While there, I learned much about Islam and never felt judged for being a Christian.

Being in a Muslim country showed me how secular our society is. While not everyone in Jordan is a faithful Muslim, a religious culture pervades life there. There are the calls for prayer broadcast five times each day. People's speech includes frequent use of "Asalaam 'Alaykum" (peace be upon you) and "insha'Allah" (if God wills).

Senator Biltaji emphasized the importance of "peace through tourism": leaving home for a purpose, earning knowledge, practicing people-to-people diplomacy.

This is a practice we should cultivate. While it is expensive to travel overseas, the benefits of encountering other cultures are great. And we can do this in our own context without great expense. We can visit people in our communities whose experience is different from our own.

Hospitality is another trait we need to cultivate. In Jordan we experienced this in many ways, from the abundant meals to people on the street helping us find our way.

Mennonite Central Committee workers Cindy and Daryl Byler told me a story that illustrates a handicap many Mennonites may have in the area of hospitality. MCC sponsors exchanges between young adults from the United States and the Middle East. At one meeting hosted by Jordanian youth, the U.S. Mennonites complained about the expense the hosts incurred in putting on an event. But in their culture, this is what hospitality means.

Peace comes through meeting others on their turf and learning from them. Peace comes through hospitality and the humility and gratitude we experience from that.—*gh*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

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December 15, 2009

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All are called to save the drowning

Ron Adams is pastor at East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa.

This summer I completed my 11th year at East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church. I've been here long enough now that the anniversary comes and goes without fanfare. In fact, I rarely think about it myself. That feels good. No jailhouse calendars for me.

In those 11 years, I have occasionally found myself in over my head. Sometimes because of my own error. Sometimes because of someone else's. And usually because of some combination of the two. Whether it's a conflict or a crisis, there are times when I've felt out of my depth and floundering. Such times are lonely and disheartening. They can even cause me to question my vocation.

I've been told that such times come for every pastor. When I'm trying to keep my head above water, knowing that others are struggling is cold comfort. OK, I'm normal. But I'm still going down for the third time.

Then the Holy Spirit grabs my hand. Here's how. Someone walks into my office and offers to help.

I mean no disrespect when I say that it's like Jesus walking into the room. Or, to stick with the drowning metaphor, like someone tossing me a lifesaver. It's an unimaginable gift.

This has happened to me twice now in my time at East Chestnut Street. I can't explain the circumstances that led me to despair or the particular shape and substance of the lifesavers. But without those lifesavers I'd not be here. I might not be anywhere, at least not as a pastor. They rescued me personally and vocationally and gave me the support I needed to make it through. Like Peter being hauled back into the boat by Jesus, I was wet and ashamed but miraculously still breathing.

We Mennonites talk a lot about the priesthood of all believers. It's one of our catch phrases, one we've grown so accustomed to we think we invented it. In fact, we probably borrowed it from our old enemy, Martin Luther, who said something like it in commenting on 1 Peter 2:9.

In any case, we use the language frequently and for multiple purposes. We use it to ward off potential clerical power grabs. (Who needs ordination, anyway? Aren't we all priests?) We use it to remind ourselves that all are called to a sanctified life. (We are all priests, so let's act like it.) And we use it to insist that worship belongs to all, not to elite, seminary-trained pastors (whoever they may be).

I find another meaning in my experiences of rescue. We are all called to saving acts. We are all called to be on the lookout for a sister or brother in trouble and reach out a hand and help them.

Our culture has not trained us for such saving acts. It insists that we decide in advance whether someone deserves saving. It gives us formulas for just how long someone ought to suffer before we act. It even allows for cases where we turn our backs and wait for the sound of splashing to stop.

But Jesus calls us to another way. When we see a sister or brother, a pastor or stranger, even an enemy, lying by the side of the road, we are called to lift them up and take them to the place of safety and healing. Jesus calls us to imitate him and save the lost and the drowning. Behave like priests, in other words, lifting the sinful and the sinned-against into the presence of the God who is love.

Some may still believe pastors are perfect, somehow holier or wiser or stronger than other Christians. But I'm glad they don't go to my church. I'm glad to be part of a community of believers that not only calls me to engage in saving acts but understands I may well be the one in need of saving. A community that is a priesthood of all believers is always ready to offer a lifesaver, no matter who is drowning. TM

TheMennonite

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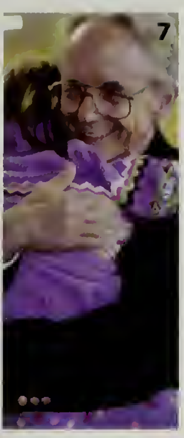
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Cover: Artist He Qi blends Chinese folk customs and traditional Chinese painting techniques with the western art of the Middle and Modern Ages to create his artistic style of color-on-paper painting. Hoping to help change the "foreign image" of Christianity in China by using artistic language, He Qi has been committed to the artistic creation of modern Chinese Christian art since 1983.
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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Map was confusing

I wanted to let you know that I appreciated Everett Thomas' editorial on Darfur ("The Forgotten Women," Oct. 20). I used it as a basis of a current event lesson for my seventh grade students at Bethany Christian School. The information about women and girls being abused in refugee camps helped personalize the conflict for some students, who then were interested in discussing U.S. foreign policy and citizens' roles in shaping it. Several students said that the editorial generated much discussion at home.

I would like to point out, however, that the accompanying map was confusing to many. It appears as if "Darfur" is an independent country, not part of Sudan. Map convention is that independent states, or countries, be in all caps. Cities, regions or "substates" are lowercase (except the first letter). Visually it would have been less confusing to show Darfur as the same color as Sudan, or perhaps striped with a note in a map legend, "area of conflict."—*Tim Lehman, New Paris, Ind.*

May need protection at churches

In the Nov. 17 issue, Anna Groff's article about a fundamentalist "Christian" disrupting an ordination service was disturbing ("Protester Sparks Look at Safety Practices"). I surely understand the need for safety around churches today, following killings that have taken place on church property done primarily by fundamentalists against people with whom they don't agree. My worry has to do with the fact that fundamentalists seem not to get the message until long after that train has left.

Until fundamentalists understand the weakness of their protests, church doors will have to be protected, I guess. That will change only when the nonfundamentalist church steps forward and shows courage in facing down the crazies.—*Jim Compton-Schmidt, Fresno, Calif.*

IN THIS ISSUE

In "Christmas Economics," Harvey Yoder (page 10) looks at the intense giving and spending during the last half of December and asks, "Can simply giving from our surplus, without any regular redistribution of wealth that narrows the gap between rich and poor, be seen as an adequate expression of biblical economics?" Anna Groff reports on another kind of linkage: two congregations that have been yoked together for almost 40 years now will "unyoke" (page 19). The editorial suggests that an economic depression may have within it some opportunities for change. Finally, we note that this issue is the last of our twice-monthly, 32-page editions. Beginning in January we will publish as a 64-page monthly.—*Editor*

Another way for young adults to get counsel

Many thanks to Moriah Hurst for her good article, "Questions and Wise Elders" (Nov. 17). My experience teaching college students and mentoring young adults resonates with her message: Many young adults want their lives to matter and long to use their gifts for good but often lack discernment of direction for their passions and recognize their need for wise counsel from community elders.

Thankfully, Mennonite Mission Network offers two programs well-suited for that purpose. In addition to Radical Journey, the international program with which Hurst works, Service Adventure is a domestic, long-term program aimed at young adults (aged 17-20). Program participants do full-time voluntary service while living in Christian community under the guidance of adult leaders and in relationship with a local congregation. More than a service program, Service Adventure helps participants discern their gifts, test their calling, grow in faith, mature in character and develop in leadership. Most participants leave it having a positive relationship with the church and go on to attend Mennonite colleges and universities. The program's success in faith formation and leadership development is demonstrable: five former participants have returned this year as unit leaders.

From my five years as a Service Adventure unit leader, I can attest to the program's capacity for making disciples and building the church. If you have passionate young adults in your congregation that are seeking direction for their lives (and you do), I recommend that you point them toward Radical Journey or Service Adventure.—*Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, Raleigh, N.C.*

A challenge for 2011 youth convention

My name is Kyle Penner, and I am a youth pastor from Winnipeg, Manitoba. I also had the privilege of serving on the Mennonite Church Canada youth assembly planning committee.

At our 2009 youth assembly in July, we spearheaded an incredibly awesome project. We wanted to do something together—something we can't do alone—that would impact our world. So after much dreaming and planning, we partnered Mennonite Church Canada with Mennonite Central Committee and in the end put together 5,000 school kits in just a couple of hours. No big deal, really. These school kits came from pooling together resources and donations from MCC and youth and churches across the country.

We read in Hebrews 10:24 that we should "consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." So consider this us spurring you.

Beat us. We dare you. Put together more school kits than us at your next convention. We did 5,000 with only 200 youth, so that's 25 school kits per person. First, beat our 5,000, then try to go on to greater things and beat our 25 kits per person.

We look forward to seeing if you can meet the challenge.—*Kyle Penner, Winnipeg, Manitoba*

Listen to pastors from immigrant congregations

I wish to commend Everett Thomas for the informative report on the concerns of the pastors of immigrant congregations (Dec. 1, page 6). There is much irony here. Those who believed and accepted for truth the gospel as preached now have a "word" for Mennonite Church USA.

They are neither naive nor uninformed. They have bared their hearts passionately for the rest of us in the church. I hope these pastors will be given due process and a full hearing in the upcoming meetings with the Mennonite Church USA executives.—*Sam Miller, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Embrace and value many voices

I hope the protesting pastors (Dec. 1, page 6) will continue to invite others and spend time together over the "homosexuality" texts. I hope they invite a trusted theologian (a John Driver, Gilberto Flores, Lydia Harder, Laverne Rutschman or David Schroeder) and together exegete the passages in question. We carry millennia of machismo and centuries of bishop authority, but for this important time of binding-and-loosing we have the common ground of the Sacred Scriptures.

A resource might be the Feb. 12, 1991, issue of *The Mennonite*, which contained many Mennonite voices; sorrowfully no Latino or African Mennonite voices were available then.

"General" in General Conference Mennonite Church (pre-Mennonite Church USA) conveyed the embracing and valuing of many voices.

My congregation, Rainbow Mennonite Church, convened 10 years of Bible studies before crafting the "all are welcome" sentence that now appears at the top of every worship bulletin.—*Muriel T. Stackley, Kansas City, Kan.*

Firing volleys to silence others

Re the Nov. 3 editorial ("About the Moratorium"), I support Everett Thomas' proposals for dealing with the homosexual issue that is plaguing the church. It is a positive proposal that is supportive of the official position of Mennonite Church USA without being obnoxiously confrontational. I also support continuing the moratorium on the subject. Letters are not a helpful way of "dialoguing" on any issue that has become highly controversial with many people on both sides not open to a change of viewpoint. Most letters have no relationship to dialoguing but become merely volleys fired to silence the position of those with a contrary point of view. Dialogue truly takes place in face-to-face encounters. And surely represented in such a meeting must be persons who have the authority to make any changes in official positions.

When we become highly combative in maintaining a position or seeking to change the group position in the body of Christ, I wonder how much listening to the Holy Spirit is taking place.—*J. Lester Brusker, Lititz, Pa.*

Opinions versus facts

A comment from a librarian I heard regarding future omission of birth and marriage announcements in *The Mennonite*: "Everything else is opinion; that at least is fact."—*Ruth L. Burkholder, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Editor's note: Beginning with our next issue (January 2010), we will publish birth and marriage announcements on our Web site. Readers who would like to receive a monthly copy of these announcements through the mail may do so by calling 800-790-2498 or emailing Rebecca@themennonite.org. There is no charge for this service to subscribers.

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

The current economic recession has: (27 votes)

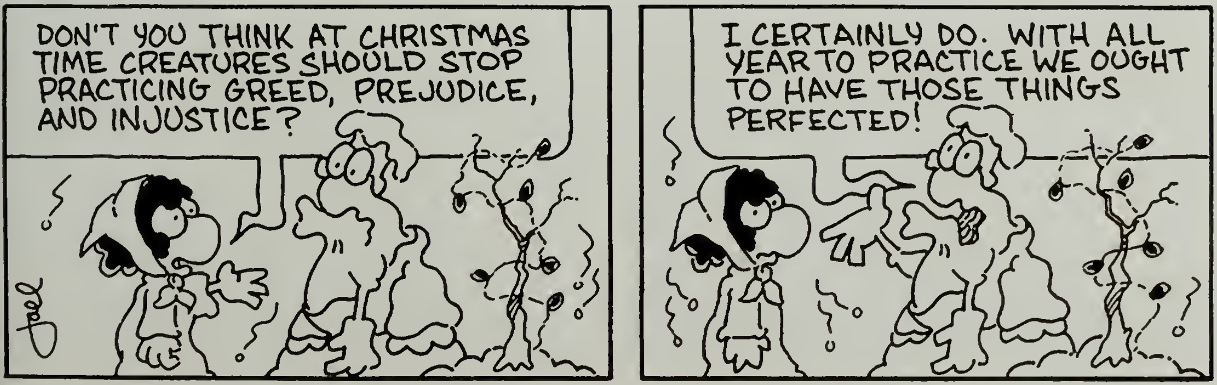
○ not caused my congregation to make changes (63%)

○ caused my congregation to make changes (33%)

○ Not sure (1%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

Pontius' Puddle **Joel Kauffmann**


DON'T YOU THINK AT CHRISTMAS TIME CREATURES SHOULD STOP PRACTICING GREED, PREJUDICE, AND INJUSTICE?
I CERTAINLY DO. WITH ALL YEAR TO PRACTICE WE OUGHT TO HAVE THOSE THINGS PERFECTED!
Joel

IN BRIEF

Hell to pay

To see how religion impacts economic behavior, Robert Barro and Rachel McCleary analyzed data from 59 countries where a majority of the population follows one of the four major religions. One of their most intriguing discoveries: in developing countries, a sharp rise in people's belief in hell, when accompanied by flat rates of church attendance, correlates with economic growth. A belief in heaven has a similar, though less pronounced, correlation with economic growth. McCleary, the daughter of a Methodist missionary, says their findings don't mean that governments should promote religion but that they should value religion and not regulate it.—*The Christian Century*

24,000 homes demolished

Studies show that more than 24,000 Palestinian houses have been demolished in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza (Occupied Territories) since 1967, says Jeff Halper, founder of Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, an Israeli peace and human rights organization committed to stopping the demolition of Palestinian homes in the Occupied Territories. Mennonite Central Committee has been supporting ICAHD activities since its inception in 1997.—*MCC*

Decline in MCC giving, people with HIV at risk

AKRON, Pa.—Giving by U.S. contributors to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is lagging behind last year's levels, but supporters continue to show their generosity through donations to several special projects. Overall contributions were down 12 percent as of Oct. 31. Giving to international and U.S. programming was about $9.8 million compared with $11.1 million in the same period in the previous fiscal year.

However, giving to Menno-Santé, a multiyear program to revitalize Mennonite-run hospitals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has exceeded expectations. Donors also responded generously to recovery efforts for natural disasters in Asia. In early November, the response totaled about $343,000, nearly 25 percent more than MCC requested. One particularly vulnerable group is people with HIV and AIDS, whom MCC supports through its Generations at Risk program. Currently MCC anticipates modest budget reductions for international programming and more extensive cuts for domestic work through MCC U.S. during fiscal year 2010-2011.—*MCC*

Spanish-language ezine wins support

GOSHEN, Ind.—In April 2008, *The Mennonite* and Mennonite Education Agency formed a partnership to publish *Meno Acontecer* (Mennonite Happenings), a free electronic magazine for Hispanic leaders. Rafael Barahona, who leads MEA's Hispanic Pastoral Leadership Education office, serves as managing editor. Anna Groff, assistant editor for *The Mennonite*, creates each issue and sends the monthly ezine to some 600 subscribers. Because of *Meno Acontecer*'s popularity, Iglesia Menonita Hispana decided to discontinue the publication of its newsletter "Encuentro" and enter into a partnership with *Meno Acontecer*, making it their official publication. The decision was made by the IMH board Nov. 2-3. To subscribe, send an email to MenoAcontecer@themennonite.org.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Jean S. Pfeiffer

Southeast Mennonites gather for Song Fest

Doris Deiner leads "Amazing Grace," sung in English and Spanish simultaneously, at the fifth annual Song Fest held Nov. 1 at Ashton Community Church in Sarasota, Fla. The 29 Mennonite congregations in Southeast Mennonite Conference include Garifuna, Creole, African-American and Hispanic members.—*Jean S. Pfeiffer*

Peacemakers discuss resistance at conference

GOSHEN, Ind.—Resisters of the Vietnam War draft and those who supported draft resisters gathered at Goshen (Ind.) College Nov. 13-14 for a conference, "Resistance: Taking a Stand Against War, 1960s to Today." Three leaders from 40 years ago and others attended the conference. The leaders—Doug Baker of Goshen, J.D. Leu of Brunswick, Md., and Jon Lind of Manassas, Va.—were Goshen College students at the time. They attended the Mennonite Church's General Conference delegate session at Turner, Ore., in August 1969 and called on the delegate body to recognize draft resistance—in addition to the historic peace position of nonresistance—as a valid and faithful peace witness. And the delegates did, somewhat to the students' surprise.—*Goshen College*

Israeli settlers beat and rob CPT workers

AT-TUWANI—On Nov. 17 in the South Hebron Hills of the West Bank, five Israeli settlers harassed a Palestinian family walking home, then beat and robbed two Christian Peacemaker Teams workers who were accompanying them. The family was returning from the nearby city of Yatta to their home village of Tuba when they encountered CPTers just south of the village of At-Tuwani.

After the CPTers warned the Palestinians about the settlers seen earlier in the morning, the family chose a longer path toward Tuba, accompanied by the CPTers. Later they saw four settler men on a ridge 50 meters above them. The settlers ran toward the Palestinians and circled them. A fifth settler, masked and hooded, appeared from the valley below. When the Palestinian man told them he was only trying to walk home, a settler shoved him. As the CPTers attempted to step between the Palestinians and settlers, the settlers pushed them to the ground, hit and kicked them and stole their two video cameras. The settlers then walked to the illegal settlement outpost of Havat Ma'on (Hill 833), where they disappeared among the trees 20 minutes later. The Palestinian family arrived home safely. —*CPT*

June Krehbiel

Friends, family and coworkers bid farewell to Schrag

im Schrag, executive director for Mennonite Church USA, hugs his granddaughter Lauren Sommerfeld during Schrag's etirement party at Mennonite Church USA offices in Newton, Kan., on Nov. 30. More than 90 people attended and brought heir well-wishes to Schrag, who served as the denomination's irst executive director, beginning in 2001.—*Gordon Houser*

Mennonite Women USA approves scholarship

NEWTON, Kan.—The Mennonite Women USA board approved $7,000 in scholarship awards for 11 international women at board meetings Nov. 7. Eight of the scholarships were renewal awards for women who are continuing their education with scholarship assistance given previously from Mennonite Women USA; four of the scholarships are going to new recipients. Individual awards granted ranged from $500 to $1,000. Renewal scholarships for 2010-11 total $5,000, while first-time scholarships totaled $2,000.—*Mennonite Women USA*

Harrisonburg church wins Bethel's funds again

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—For the second straight time, the Harrisonburg (Va.) Mennonite Church youth group won Bethel College's service promotion at the Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009 youth gathering. And for the second time, Cornerstone Christian Academy in Philadelphia was the beneficiary. Harrisonburg Mennonite has a close relationship with Cornerstone Christian Academy that goes back about 25 years. As they did at Convention 2009 in San José, Calif., staff from Bethel's admissions, alumni and church relations offices chose to emphasize service at their display booth.

Youth who stopped by the booth helped put together playground equipment to be given to FCI Academy Kindergarten Village in Columbus, Ohio, and also had the chance to designate funds to a service organization of their choice by putting tickets in the hopper upon each visit.
—*Bethel College*

EMU staff relish weekly radio programs

HARRISONBURG, Va.—They are three men on a mission—seeking to serve up an appetizing smorgasbord of eclectic music that may otherwise not hit the local radio airwaves. John L. Horst, Ted Grimsrud and Jim Bishop produce and host weekly programs on public radio station WEMC, 91.7 FM on a volunteer basis.

Horst, a retired physics professor at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, hosts "Mostly Mennonite, Mostly A Cappella," 8-9:30 a.m. EST Sundays. He plays blocks of mostly unaccompanied sacred choral music by local and nationally known artists and groups.

Bishop, who dubs himself a "hopeless nostalgic," dishes up an hour of dusty discs from the decade of the 1950s, the "Friday Night Jukebox," 8-9 p.m. Fridays. Grimsrud, professor of Bible and religion at EMU, is host of "Wavelength" on WEMC, 3-6 p.m. Saturdays. He describes the program as "music from the intersection of country, folk, rock and roll, blues and gospel."—*Jim Bishop*

Disabilities and Deaf Ministries partnership

GOSHEN, Ind.—The Boards of Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADNet) and Anabaptist Deaf Ministries (ABDM) have entered into an agreement for the coming year to raise the visibility and promote the ministries of both organizations in Mennonite and related churches. Representatives from the ABDM Board met with the ADNet Board at its Oct. 31 meeting to talk about their common concerns. Later in the meeting, the ADNet Board accepted a proposal that came from the ABDM Board at its meeting earlier in the month. The agreement brings clarity and intentional focus to what has been an informal working relationship since ADNet was formed in 2003. The new understandings mean that ADNet will facilitate a more intentional Deaf Ministries presence with brochures and resources at ADNet's displays at conferences and other church events.—*ADNet*

—compiled by Anna Groff

IN BRIEF

Bethel football play YouTube hit

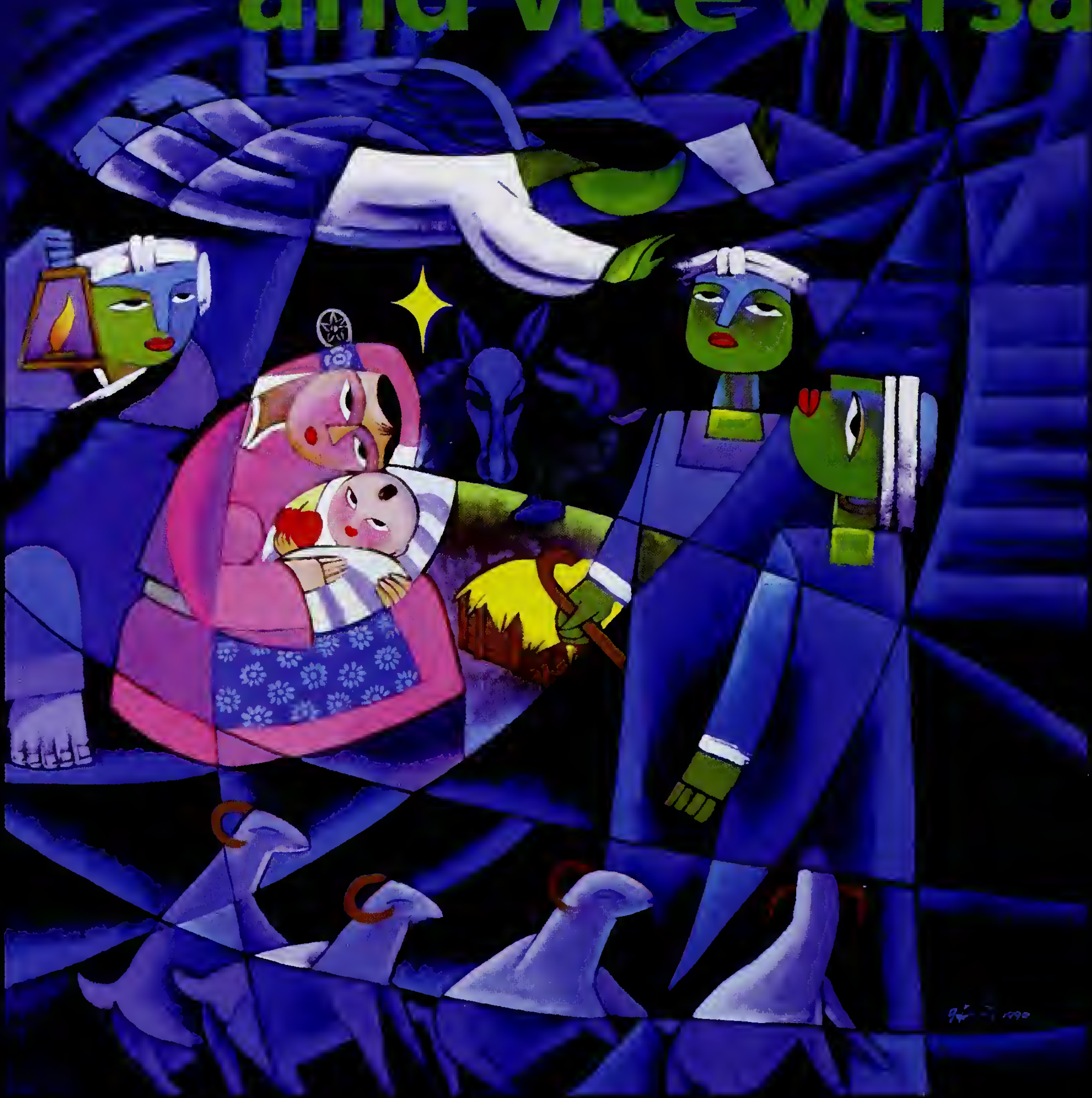
The last home game of the 2009 season for Bethel College's football team in North Newton, Kan., was memorable not only because the Threshers won 30-0 or that it was Mike Moore's last game as head coach. The game will be remembered for a wild play that took place late in the third quarter. With his team leading Sterling College 20-0, the coach put in senior defensive end Joel Maple for an unusual touchdown play: Quarterback Garrett Hiebert made a no-look, over-the-shoulder throwback at the goal line to Maple, who caught it in the end zone for the score. The "bouquet toss," captured on video, became a YouTube sensation. As of Nov. 20, it was the most viewed video. The video is called "Bethel College Football Trick Play."
—*Bethel College*

EMU offers Advent devotions

Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., is providing a daily meditation on the meaning of Advent on its Web site at emu.edu/devotions. The brief devotional articles have been prepared by EMU and Eastern Mennonite Seminary faculty, staff, students and alumni.—*EMU*

Correction: The Lois Kauffman who serves as conference coordinator for Bridgefolk (Dec. 1) is not the Lois Kaufmann who serves as Central District Conference minister.

God with us and vice versa?



Reading Scripture with the expectation that
God speaks through it
into our lives and culture
is but one example
of God's presence with us.

God's Spirit is present and active in our world and in our lives today.

by Brian Martin Burkholder

In the Christian church year, this is the season of waiting yet preparing for the coming of Immanuel. In worship we sing the songs of Advent—the songs of Jesus' Advent—the songs of Jesus' coming: "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" and "Hark! The Glad Sound!" We sing the songs of prophesy from old: "Comfort, Comfort, O My People" and "O Come, O Come, Immanuel."

If we follow the lectionary readings, we're sure to visit Isaiah 7:13-15: "Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel." Immanuel becomes a central theme for our worship and reflection. In this text, the name Immanuel, meaning "God is with us," embodies the divine promise of protection to Jerusalem.

To what degree are we with God? Are we shining light into the dark places of this world?

In these weeks of leaning toward Christmas, I typically reflect on what it means for God to have been with us. Our record of "God with us" in Scripture is significant. Dedicated ones recorded the narratives of God's faithfulness toward God's people since creation, through the exodus out of slavery, on to the promised land and beyond. We see how David cried out to God through psalms of worship in times both good and bad. And we read prophesy of the coming of Immanuel.

During Advent, I find myself not only reflecting on God's faithfulness in days gone by but also on God's presence and faithfulness today. Jesus told of the Advocate who would be with us until the time of his return. God's Spirit is present and active in our world and in our lives today. Reading Scripture with the expectation that God speaks through it into our lives and culture is but one example of this. Experiencing God's healing power through the love and touch of others as well as through the inspiration of the natural world is another. God is with us.

Still, I thirst for the coming of Jesus. There is a vast gulf between reading about the mission and miracles of Jesus and experiencing the dynamic presence of an earthly yet heavenly Jesus ourselves. I yearn to reach out and touch the garment of Jesus to receive healing and wholeness beyond anything imaginable. I wish for a similar kind of healing and wholeness for a broken people, communities in conflict, a dying earth and a world at war, too. Immanuel—if only.

Given the tension of waiting for Jesus to come again and what can feel like the emptiness of going through the motions of worshiping the God of yesterday, perhaps we would do well to give ourselves to Advent reflections on "us with God." Rather than focusing again this year on how God was with God's people of old (way back then) or on a future day when Jesus comes again to make things right in the world (if only Jesus would return now), we might choose to live out the dream of God for this world to the greatest extent possible in these days.

To work toward these ends, a first step is to reflect on how well we are aligning ourselves with the ways of God and the mission of Jesus. To what degree are we with God? Are we shining light into the dark places of this world? Have we been salt and yeast enough to enhance the human experience? Do we choose life and live in ways that allow others to live with enough? Are we working toward healing, hope and wholeness in our lives, communities and world as followers of Jesus who take him and what he taught seriously?

O Come, O come Immanuel—but in the meantime, let us be fully with you.

Brian Martin Burkholder is director of campus ministries and campus pastor at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

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Christmas e

How both the Pentateuch and Penteco

by Harvey Yoder

> *And you shall hallow the 50th year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property. … In the jubilee it shall be released, and the property shall be returned.* —Leviticus 25:10, 28b

> *Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts. … There will, however, be no one in need among you. … "Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land."*—Deuteronomy 15:1, 4a, 11b

> *There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. … and it was distributed to each as any had need.*—Acts 4:34-35

> *I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."*—2 Corinthians 8:13-15

From Thanksgiving to the end-of-year deadline for charitable deductions, many North Americans become extra generous in their giving. Christmas gift giving alone provides the kind of boost to the economy that many retailers depend on for their survival. Like the Leviticus 25 Jubilee, the season moves us beyond our usual charity.

How could this Jubilee-like mindset, this holiday season thinking, transform our stewardship?

At a recent session of the Virginia Conference assembly we had an extended discussion of The Corinthian Plan. This churchwide proposal, while not contributing to the needs of all the saints (as actually taught in the Corinthian texts), at least offers help to pastors who can't afford health insurance. Delegates voiced their approval but in light of leaner economic times wondered whether the required number of congregations could afford to fund it, especially in light of growing concerns about meeting existing mission and conference budgets.

I couldn't help wondering why a church as well-to-do as ours should ever have even one needy pastor among us—or have a single outreach programs that is underfunded? And why should our church agencies have to increasingly depend on salaried fund-raisers to help them meet their annual budgets?

Far from regularly redistributing our wealth, most of us aren't generous in even contributing from it.

One answer may be that we have been focusing on only half of what the Bible teaches about stewardship. We have taught well the half that has to do with contributing generously of our tithes and offerings but have said or done little about the other biblical mandate, that of radically and regularly redistributing our wealth in the spirit of Christmas and in celebration of a Jesus-inspired Jubilee.

Unfortunately, far from regularly redistributing our wealth, most of us aren't generous in even contributing from it, according to sociologists Christian Smith, Michael Emerson and Patricia Snell, authors of *Passing the Plate, Why Christians Don't Give Away More of Their Money* (Oxford University Press, 2008). Their study finds that one in four U.S. Protestants doesn't give at all, and the median rate of annual giving for that group is only $200, less than 0.5 percent of their taxable income. According to a 2005 study commissioned by Mennonite Church USA, the typical Mennonite member gives just less than 10 percent of income to some kind of charity.

conomics

romote more than tithes and offerings

According to the *Passing the Plate* authors, what makes U.S. churchgoing Christians look especially miserly is that together they earn a staggering $2.5 trillion a year. That would be enough wealth, they claim, to qualify for membership in the G7, a group representing the world's seven largest economies. A modest 10 percent of that sum, they point out, could do wonders to alleviate poverty and promote missions around the world.

Few of us would expect the unemployed and financially destitute to tithe. But those of us who live in one of the wealthiest economies in the world should be able to give far more. Regular giving, after all, is like paying rent for the privilege of enjoying life on a truly great planet.

But can simply giving from our surplus, without any regular redistribution of wealth that narrows the gap between rich and poor, be seen as an adequate expression of biblical economics?

Ched Myers, author of *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*, doesn't think so. He argues that both the teachings of Jesus and the practices of the early church support a more radical stewardship, one grounded in Old Testament practices meant to periodically reboot and re-level the economic playing field.

Myers points out that in Jesus' first recorded message (Luke 4:16-30), he highlights the prophet Isaiah's announcement of good news to the poor and the release of prisoners and reminds us that prisoners in those days were usually impoverished people who were unable to repay money they borrowed in bad years to keep their families alive. The Isaiah 61 text that Jesus uses appears to be linked to two passages in the Penteteuch, the Deuteronomy 15 teaching on canceling debts every seven years and the Leviticus 25 Jubilee text, one that mandates that no profit be made from the land every seventh year and that repossessed land be restored to the original owners every 50th year, a "year of the Lord's favor."

Today we hear almost nothing about regularly forgiving others their monetary debts or about restoring property taken in foreclosure. But Jesus promises salvation to Zaccheus when he commits himself to redistributing his wealth. Later he asks the so-called "rich young ruler" to do the same. And in each of the first three Gospels, the latter story is accompanied by Jesus teaching us to become like owner-less children in order to become a part of the Jubilee-based God movement.

It shouldn't surprise us, then, that the Spirit-filled early church went well beyond simply sharing contributions from their surplus. The Book of Acts describes how believers joyfully practiced Jesus' form of Jubilee justice by selling property and distributing the proceeds among those in need.

In the same spirit, the apostle Paul appealed to the church at Corinth on at least one occasion to practice a Jubilee-style sharing of its wealth with needy believers abroad. And the apostle had only harsh words for those who ate and drank to excess at their community agape meals while refusing to share their abundance with poorer members of the congregation.

Followers of Jesus are not to gain ever more wealth for themselves while the Lazarus-like poor in the world become ever more destitute.

All this makes it clear that followers of Jesus are not to gain ever more wealth for themselves while the Lazarus-like poor in the world become ever more destitute. In order for God's will to be done "on earth as it is in heaven," periodic redistribution is called for. Regarding the Lord's Prayer, John Howard Yoder in *The Politics of Jesus* writes, "Jesus … tells us purely and simply to erase the debts of those who owe us money; which is to say, practice the jubilee."

Claude Rosenberg and Tim Stone, in a December 2006 article in the *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*, make the case for giving based on our assets and not simply on our incomes, a principle they believe is clearly taught

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in the Torah and amplified in the New Testament. Our common practice of a tithe- and offering-based stewardship, they say, provides false justification for believers becoming as wealthy as they can as long as they give regularly and generously from their surplus.

A current illustration of this is the case of Dave Ramsey, considered one of the nation's leading advisors on Christian money management. Over 1 million people in 5,600 churches recently tuned in to his 90-minute televised infomercial-style Town Hall for Hope broadcast. His DVD-based Financial Peace University courses are offered in churches everywhere, including Mennonite congregations. Profits from his book and DVD sales and from his many seminars have made Ramsey a multimillionaire, and he has just built a lavish home on a $1 million lot in a gated community overlooking Tennessee's richest county.

One of our problems is that we find it hard to make the case that this is even a problem. After all, Ramsey earned his money legally, saved it carefully and no doubt has given much of it generously, just as we are all taught to do.

What is missing is a theology of stewardship that deals with the biblical teaching of periodically and systematically redistributing and reinvesting our wealth in ways that give a hand up to the underclass.

What is missing is a theology of stewardship that deals with the other half of the biblical teaching on wealth, that of periodically and systematically redistributing and reinvesting it in ways that give a hand up to the underclass. We have overlooked the fact that the Pentateuch actually commands this, and the church of Pentecost and of the apostle Paul clearly promotes it.

Here are some modest examples of how congregations and individuals might celebrate seasons of Jubilee:

1. Create a congregational Jubilee Fund to support an urgent local or international need and invite members to sell something of significant value to them—or draw substantially from their savings or investment accounts—to invest generously in such a fund.

2. Freeze or reduce congregational and conference staff salaries and benefits for a chosen year and contribute the savings to a Jubilee Fund, then urge each member to make similar investments.

3. Place a moratorium on church building or remodeling projects for a year (or longer), focusing instead on meeting direct people needs in the community and abroad.

4. Adopt a third world, inner-city or other needy congregation or community with whom to exchange information and/or work and study teams.

5. Promote members making gifts of some of their current IRA holdings and other investments and/or to transfer them to interest-free or low interest microloan funds. Our MMA advisors can show us how to do this.

6. Engage in serious Bible study and worship on the theme of redistribution stewardship.

7. Match our spending for Christmas and other gift giving each year with equal investments in missions, relief and other means of outreach, and on every seventh year dispense with Christmas and other gift giving to the non-needy altogether, then double what we redistribute to the poor.

8. Invite members of third world congregations to become honorary members of the governing boards of our congregations and church institutions, regularly consulting with them by phone or email about our spending and investment decisions.

9. Rewrite our wills so that they represent a more just form of Jubilee redistribution of our accumulated assets.

In order to be faithful to Jesus, we need to think and act in the spirit of Christmas rather than of capitalism, investing less in our own comfort and security and more in what delights the heart of God.

In this way we will joyfully trumpet liberty throughout the earth.

Harvey Yoder is pastor of Family of Hope, a Harrisonburg, Va., house church, and a full-time licensed marriage and family counselor at the Family Life Resource Center.

Except you see as a child

by Leona Dueck Penner

With the toss of a black lace shawl,
a doll wrapped in a bit of blue blanket
and a half-empty laundry basket,
my granddaughter, at 6,
transforms our basement into Bethlehem.

She instructs me to play a plodding,
slightly dimwitted Joseph while
her older sister flies in for several brief
(but striking) appearances
as an angel
a shepherd
a wise-woman
and one of Herod's soldiers hunting
Rachel's babies.

Dramatic scenes that cause the young director
to forget her own lines as the play becomes real
before her awestruck eyes.

Later, when I ask if the newborn Jesus
is doing OK now, she says confidently
(while gently patting his holy blanketed back):

"Of course! he's the son of God!
And he's grown a lot.
He's asleep right now, dreaming of
fields full of flowers.
I know because that's what I prayed for."

Leona Dueck Penner is a member of Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

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The things that make for peace

Our treatment of immigrants in the United States has links with the Palestine-Israel conflict.

by Timothy Seidel

As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."—Luke 19:41-42

Dominus Flevit on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem is the name of a church and a site of pilgrimage for many Christian travelers to the Holy Land. Literally, "Dominus Flevit" means "the Lord wept" in Latin and is remembered as the site where Jesus stopped to look out over Jerusalem to weep and ask this striking question to all who would follow him.

Do we recognize the things that make for peace? Are they right in front of us, hidden from our eyes?

Since my return from Palestine, I cannot help but see the linkages to the work of peace and justice here in the United States.

The language of peace often surrounds us. For example, I work with Mennonite Central Committee U.S. in Peace and Justice Ministries, which includes programs dealing with antiracism training, immigration education, women's advocacy, peace education, restorative justice and conflict transformation. MCC's peace and justice work in the United States goes back more than 60 years to the establishment of the Peace Section in the early 1940s, an effort that has worked over the years to nurture the peace witness of the church and seek to live out that witness faithfully.

Prior to this, I worked as a peace development worker with MCC in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, living in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, working to build relationships with Palestinian and Israeli groups committed to justice, peace and reconciliation and communicating their stories to folks back here in the United States.

When I read the text from Luke's Gospel, I cannot help but feel that Jesus is speaking directly to me, to us. Indeed, these words are a challenge to all of us who make use of the language of peace.

This is a subversive text. And it reminds me of a story about what the language of peace in Palestine-Israel looks like, a story from Hedy Sawadsky, a relief worker with MCC in the Middle East in the 1960s. A Palestinian woman challenged her: "What you're doing here is fine, but it is only band-aid work. ... Go home and work for peace and get at the root causes of evil and war."

"Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye (Matthew 7:3-5).

Since my return from Palestine, I cannot help but see the linkages to the work of peace and justice here in the United States. Just as that Palestinian woman told Hedy, the root causes are too often rooted here.

I continue to struggle with not being cynical about the situation in Palestine and in Gaza in particular. It is not a healthy place for me to be, spiritually or emotionally. But the Gaza Strip is a heartbreaking catastrophe in so many ways, and the people there have been suffering for so long. It makes me think about the ways we in the United

A view of the Old City of Jerusalem —with both the Haram a-Sharif and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre visible —from Dominus Flevit church on the Mount of Olives. Photo by Timothy Seidel

States are irrelevant—in the sense that it is less about what we need to do and more about what we need to stop doing. In other words, honestly looking at the ways we, the United States, have made Gaza into a prison: through our tax dollars, our military aid to Israel, which includes the military hardware used in Gaza, our veto power that obstructs United Nations Security Council responses or our media representations of Gaza and Palestinians that too often dehumanize.

Honesty in our self-reflection should lead us to confession and repentance of our own histories of violence and injustice on this continent. I once heard quoted a Native American who argued that the best way for people from the United States to address the terrible conflict in Palestine-Israel is to deal more seriously with our own history of colonization, dispossession and displacement and work for justice for the indigenous peoples in the United States. This would not only address a serious and ongoing historical sin but in the process more effectively help our Palestinian and Israeli brothers and sisters suffering in that broken land. This manner of systemic analysis recognizes that work for justice in Gaza should be part of the work for justice everywhere.

This has led me to seek a "thicker" definition of peace, one that emerges out of a more systemic analysis of violence and injustice. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about these linkages, particularly in naming the connections between racism, poverty (classism) and war (militarism). Or put another way, we must recognize that our work at antiimperialism abroad must be complemented by our antiracism and antioppression work at home.

A Native American argued that the best way for people from the United States to address the terrible conflict in Palestine-Israel is to deal more seriously with our own history of colonization, dispossession and displacement.

Identifying the historical trends of colonization, dispossession, and displacement in a place such as the Middle East, how might an accompanying peace issue look in our communities? How might we identify these linkages? Immigration is such an issue, an issue all too invisible, or at least invisible to some. In fact, wherever you may be right now you likely will not have to look too far to uncover

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Israel's wall in the West Bank is effectively annexing a large percentage of Bethlehem's agricultural land. Photo by Timothy Seidel

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the plight of undocumented neighbors and discover opportunities to recognize "the things that make for peace" particularly as it relates to the biblical call to welcome the stranger (Leviticus 19:33-34; Ephesians 2:17-20).

Many Christian communities remain uneducated about the political, economic and social issues that cause immigration.

Newcomers to the United States continue to encounter an unwelcoming hostility shaped by racism and xenophobia. They are too often met with suspicion, intimidation, isolation, militarized borders, raids and migratory documentation backlogs. In recent years, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency conducted some of the largest workplace raids in the history of the United States, causing fear, separating and terrorizing families and disrupting entire communities and the lives of immigrants and U.S. citizens. The ongoing construction of the U.S.-Mexico border wall materializes this antiimmigrant sentiment. There are an estimated 12 to 16 million people in the United States with undocumented immigrant status. And the U.S. immigration system continues to be dysfunctional, lacking programs for guest workers and increasing documentation backlogs and proposing futile programs that do not address the root causes of immigration.

I this context, many Christian communities continue to be ambivalent about how it should respond to immigrants, and in its majority the church remains uneducated about the political, economic and social issues that cause immigration. For example, when coming to the United States individuals are looking for economic opportunities, means for survival for themselves and their families and fleeing the dire situations their countries are facing—many of which are directly connected to foreign policies of the United States, including trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, that could be understood to lead to the "colonization" of local economies, resulting in a displacement that dispossesses whole communities and uproots people. The economies of neighboring countries, such as Mexico, have been seriously affected by trade poli-

Peace in its thickest, most holistic form always challenges the status quo that maintains the structures of violence that benefit the powerful and privileged.

cies that promote economic disparity and dependence.

A genuine peace that speaks to all these forms of violence and injustice is our challenge. This takes us beyond the all-too-familiar and omnipresent language of peace, recognizing that what is required is more than a word, more than holding another peace summit that provides the opportunity for another high profile photo op, more than another gathering around a peace agency or a peace church.

Indeed, peace in its thickest, most holistic form always challenges the status quo that maintains the structures of violence that benefit the powerful and privileged. And so, a thicker definition of peace requires a thicker, more systemic analysis and approach to peace, accompanied by engaged and engaging theological reflection.

Whether it is seeking a just peace in Palestine-Israel or radical hospitality for the stranger in our midst, how do we look with open eyes and listen with open ears and hearts so that we may see and recognize on this day the things that make for peace?

Timothy Seidel is director for Peace and Justice Ministries with Mennonite Central Committee U.S. He was a peace development worker with MCC in the Occupied Palestinian Territories 2004-2007 and a contributing author to Under Vine and Fig Tree: Biblical Theologies of Land and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict *(Cascadia Publishing, 2007).*

The U.S.-Mexico wall in Nogales, Sonora; the crosses represent men, women and children who have died attempting to cross the border into the United States, thousands of whom have died over the last decade. Photo by Saulo Padilla

Let our money and time make a difference

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.—Luke 1:78-79 NRSV

Marty Lehman is director of administration and advancement for Mennonite Church USA.

With great interest I read the story of Franconia Mennonite Conference congregations holding a fund-raiser for congregations of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference ("Pa. Mennonites Help Indiana Churches," June 2). The current recession has had a significant impact on many residents of Elkhart County in northern Indiana, and thus on Indiana-Michigan congregations. This generous act was celebrated by many Indiana-Michigan congregations as they received the gifts from sister congregations in the East.

One evening on the national news I heard the story of a local schoolteacher who was concerned about students going hungry on weekends. During the week, the students were getting free breakfast and lunch, but on the weekends they often went without meals because their parents had lost jobs. The teacher organized volunteers, asked for food donations and soon was feeding these students and their families on weekends.

While we have become assimilated into our world, let's follow a different path this Christmas season.

Sometimes during difficult times we find the most amazing stories of giving. They are stories of people who go above and beyond to make a difference.Despite the fact that most of us have smaller retirement accounts, some of us are unemployed and many of us have seen a decrease in our income, we are still a wealthy people when compared with the rest of the world. God has been gracious and given us far more than we need. Our standard of living is considerably higher than that of most people. We have plenty to eat and have warm and comfortable homes. We have much to be grateful for this Christmas season.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Our new executive director**—Laura Lehman Amstutz
- **Celebrating Sabbath in a busy world**—Carole Ricketts

Jesus spoke often about money—and how we should use our money. The rich young ruler was asked to give away all his money—something he decided he couldn't do. His love for his money exceeded his desire to follow Jesus (Matthew 19:16-23).

Zacchaeus gave away half his wealth in order to make amends and follow Jesus (Luke 19:1-10). We know the story of the widow's mite—she gave all she had (Mark 12:41-44). We are also familiar with the story of the boy who shared his bread and fish, his lunch. God multiplied the boy's lunch to feed thousands (John 6:1-14).

Jesus gave of himself day after day. It didn't matter how tired he was. He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind and preached the gospel. He cared for people each and every day.

We have many Mennonite organizations who are literally feeding the hungry and taking care of the widows and orphans. Our congregations are involved in numerous local, regional and international ministries. Our congregational pastors our visiting the sick, praying with the dying and counseling those in crisis. We have many opportunities to give our money to ministries that are making a difference in this world. We all want to make a difference—to change a life. Giving our money is a way to reach out and change lives.

If we don't feel we can give money, then giving of our time and talents is another way of giving. Take the time to talk to a visitor after church, for example. Or visit our neighbor we don't know very well. Call a friend who has been ill. All of these take little time but are significant acts of charity.

The Advent season is about waiting and anticipating the birth of Jesus. It is about hope. We hope the Holy Spirit will fill us and teach us to be followers of Jesus.

While we have become assimilated into our world, let's follow a different path this Christmas season. Let's allow God to show us how to be generous people. Let's allow our money and our time to make a difference—to make a difference for Jesus. Reach out. Let others see Jesus in you.

Two churches now learn how to unyoke

Presbyterian, Mennonite congregations have worshiped together for 40 years.

Two congregations that maintained a "yoked fellowship" for 40 years must now figure out how to unyoke. For almost 40 years, Donnellson Presbyterian Church and Zion Mennonite Church, Donnellson, worshiped together as a yoked fellowship every Sunday.

However, on Aug. 30, the Presbyterian congregation voted unanimously to close. The challenges for the Presbyterian congregation included a declining and aging membership, maintaining the building, finding church workers for ministries and decreasing giving amounts. Active membership had declined to about 15 people, all but one of whom is over age 60.

"I hope [Presbyterian members] find the church that continues to nurture them spiritually," says Pastor Audrey Ratzlaff. "This is an incredibly difficult time for them in ways I can't even understand. I'm trying just to walk with them and offer what I can."

These members now face the following options:

- join a Presbyterian congregation,
- continue to worship with Zion,
- join as full members of Zion (rebaptism not required),
- join another congregation—neither Presbyterian nor Mennonite,
- do not become members of any congregation.

Ratzlaff says she hears that people want to stay with the Presbyterian church until it closes. A few members say they plan to continue worshiping at Zion Mennonite and may even join. A few have said they will transfer to other Presbyterian congregations, but no one has left yet.

For those coming from traditions of infant baptism, the decision whether to be baptized as an adult believer will be based on the person's conscience, in consultation with the pastor and deacons, says Pastor Ratzlaff.

"I hope that each congregation and each member of each congregation ... can see this as an opportunity that God is opening some new doors," says Ratzlaff.

Ratzlaff also says this transition provides a time to review Zion's Anabaptist roots and discover ways to be distinctively Mennonite in our community.

The agreement between the congregations has been to move between the two buildings for worship every four months. However, when the Presbyterians voted to close, the worship was held in their building; according to the rotation they should have switched on Oct. 1. The council offered to continue to worship in the Presbyterian building for four additional months until its closure at the end of January 2010.

MENNONITE
1851
PRESBYTERIAN
1872
A TIME OF TRIBUTE TO OUR FOREFATHERS

Photo provided

Mennonite and Presbyterian members participate in Donnellson, Iowa's 2004 Fourth of July parade; the float depicts the founding of the two churches.

As a yoked fellowship, the churches shared a pastor and a yoked fellowship board. Guidelines adopted in 1989 outlined three yoked committees: Christian education, worship and evangelism/outreach. Zion and Donnellson each maintained its own building, membership lists, congregational structure and denomination.

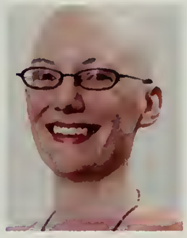
The initial arrangement of the yoked fellowship was only to share a pastor. In 1970, both Zion and Donnellson had been without a minister for a period of time. They were similar in size and membership. The agreement for most of the time was to split pastoral expenses half and half.

When Ratzlaff began as pastor in 2007, that arrangement was modified to better match the percentage of contributing members in each congregation; the Mennonite church provides two-thirds of her salary and benefits, while the Presbyterians have covered one-third.

At first, each congregation continued its own separate worship services and Sunday school. In 1972, combined services were held in June-August. In 1973, both worship and Sunday school were combined for the summer. On June 2, 1974, joint worship and Sunday school began, alternating the place for meeting between the two church buildings every four months.

The Presbyterian Session invited members of both congregations, former ministers of the congregations, community friends and representatives from the Presbytery of East Iowa to a lunch and historical program on Dec. 6. The churches will officially part after worship on Jan. 24, 2010.

"I am pondering a variety of ways to ritually mark the congregation's closure and look ahead as each person continues to follow God's leading," says Ratzlaff.—*Anna Groff*



Audrey Ratzlaff

Editor's note: The General Conference Mennonite Church was organized at a meeting on May 28, 1860, in West Point, Iowa. Zion Mennonite Church in Donnellson, Iowa, was one of four founding member congregations and one of only two that still exist. The other is West Swamp Mennonite Church in Quakertown, Pa.

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

ONLINE

Top 10 stories in 2009: Stutzman next MC USA leader; The Corinthian Plan

1. Ervin Stutzman

1. Stutzman next MC USA executive director

Ervin R. Stutzman of Harrisonburg, Va., was named the denomination's next executive director by Mennonite Church USA Executive Board at a special meeting held Aug. 25. Stutzman is vice president and seminary dean and professor of church ministries at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg. Stutzman will begin his tenure in early 2010. (See Sept. 1.)

2. MC USA pastors get The Corinthian Plan

The Corinthian Plan will become a reality Jan. 1, 2010. The health-care access plan of Mennonite Church USA reached its revised goal in October. Project director Keith Harder expects that nearly 70 percent of the denomination's eligible, credentialed pastors will be on the new plan. While the original participation goal of 80 percent of Mennonite Church USA congregations will not be met, The Corinthian Plan project team, including MMA staff and actuaries, agreed that there is sufficient participation to have a plan that will have a solid financial foundation. (See Oct. 20.)

3. Resolution emerges from Convention 2009

Over 7,000 people gathered June 30-July 5 in Columbus, Ohio, for the Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009. The church's responses to leaders and congregations not in compliance with the denomination's teaching position on human sexuality generated several unscheduled sidebar actions. During the convention, a group of activists launched their "Pink Menno campaign," drawing reporters from Fox News and Associated Press. In response, the Delegate Assembly overwhelmingly passed "A Resolution on Following Christ and Growing Together as Communities Even in Conflict." (See July 21 and photo below.)

J. Tyler Klassen of *mPress*

3. Convention 2009 delegates listen to those at the microphone as they considered adoption of a resolution on conflict.

4. Bethel College ousts President Bartel

As of Aug. 16, Barry Bartel was no longer president of Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. The board of directors met Aug. 15 and informed Bartel the next day of the change. Bartel had a five-year contract with Bethel, and this was the first review he had received, Bartel said. He had been with Bethel for three years. John K. Sheriff, professor of English and current executive vice president for institutional development, became interim president. (See Sept. 1.)

5. Joe Rosa charged with crimes, still missing

Joe Rosa, a missing church planter from Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference, has been charged with several crimes. Rosa has been missing from his home near Lewisburg, Pa., since May 21.

Police filed charges June 9 against Rosa, listing five counts of indecent assault, two counts of recklessly endangering the welfare of children and four counts of corruption of minors. The events in question occurred between 2005 and 2009, according to the police reports. Patrick Beaver, a state trooper and the investigating officer, reported that Samuel López informed him of possible misconduct by Rosa. López was the representative to the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA from Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church). (See July 7.)

6. MWC meets in Paraguay, sees transitions

Almost 6,000 people registered for the Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15 in Asunción, Paraguay. Of these, 3,109 came from Paraguay, 766 from the United States and 730 from Canada. MWC's postassembly financial status, according to Oct. 31 closing figures, was positive, with a balance of $325,340 in the Assembly Fund.

Danisa Ndlovu from Zimbabwe, who was vice president for six years and president-elect for three, was installed as president of MWC for six years. He succeeded Nancy Heisey of Harrisonburg, Va. Janet Plenert from Canada was elected vice president for six years. In May 2012, Larry Miller will conclude 22 years as general secretary of MWC. (See Aug. 18 and photo on page 21.)

Other top stories include resolution on conflict from Convention 2009 delegates, Bartel's departure from Bethel College, deferral of one-board model.

7. Sara Wenger Shenk new AMBS president

Sara Wenger Shenk, associate dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va., has been named president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. She will begin the new assignment no later than Oct. 1, 2010, following several months of orientation and preparation. Wenger Shenk has been a member of the faculty and administration of EMS since 1995. In addition to serving as associate dean, she also is associate professor of Christian practices. (See Nov. 3.)

8. MC USA schools face endowment losses

Mennonite Church USA colleges, universities and seminaries all suffered losses to their investment portfolios as of June 30, 2008. But the economic recession made matters worse in the months after their fiscal years ended. The situations at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., and Hesston (Kan.) College drew the attention of the *Newton Kansan* in a Feb. 13 article by Cristina Janney. Hesston reported additional losses to their endowment. According to the article, 35 percent of the school's $10 million endowment had disappeared in the current economic meltdown. From July 1 to Nov. 30, 2008, Bethel lost more than $4 million, around 30 percent of its endowment. (See March 3.)

9. EB defers one-board model again

At Jan. 22-24 Executive Board meetings in Phoenix, Ariz., board members deferred the one-board model originally announced in March 2008. This proposal called for strengthening the church's vision by "changing our relationships, behaviors and organization" with a unified churchwide communication and identity system, a cohesive funding system and the development of one integrated board of directors for the denomination that would replace individual boards for each agency. On June 22, the Executive Board again deferred the model of one leadership board, "provided that we can find an alternative route for integrating our churchwide priorities." (Feb. 3.)

10. Executive Leadership sees staff changes

Six individuals planned to leave Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership this year.

Executive director James Schrag announced his plans to retire on Nov. 30 after 36 years of ministry.

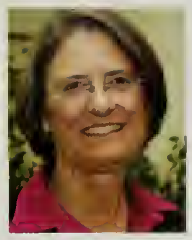
Associate executive director Ron Byler will also leave Executive Leadership at the end of the year. Byler began serving as interim executive director on Aug. 1 and served in that role until the new executive director Ervin Stutzman was named. Byler says that after he leaves he will probably work in some area of nonprofit management.

Director of convention planning Jorge Vallejos planned his final Mennonite Church USA convention this summer and worked his final day in August. Vallejos says he would like to continue working for the church but in a different capacity.

Identity director Marathana Prothro resigned from her role after Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009. Prothro began a graduate assistantship in August with Wichita (Kan.) State University, where she has been attending part-time since 2006. She will finish a master's degree in communication in May 2010.

Director of intercultural relations Iris de León-Hartshorn transitioned to a position in a Mennonite Church USA area conference. In September, she began serving as executive conference minister for Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference after her last day with Executive Leadership on Aug. 14.

After dedicating 21 years to her job, administrative assistant for the communications office **Jo-Ann Schmidt** took early retirement this year; her last day at work was July 31. (See July 7.)—*compiled by Anna Groff*


7. Sara Wenger Shenk

Lowell Brown for Meetinghouse

6. Grupo Ebenezer, one of many groups performing at Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15.

Another record for contributions in 2009

1,051 households send $81,830 by Dec. 7, a 9 percent increase over last year.

Readers of *The Mennonite* set another record for financial contributions in 2009. As of Dec. 7, we received $81,830 from 1,051 households. In addition to the people we recognize in the following list, 299 contributors asked that their names not be published. By this time last year, readers had contributed $75,293. Those whose contributions arrived after Dec. 7 will be included in next year's list.

Contributions from our readers represent 18 percent of our total revenue so far this year. Subscription income currently is 58 percent of total revenue, and advertising is 22 percent.

Mennonite Church USA bylaws require that *The Mennonite* be a "self-supporting entity" and receives no financial subsidy from the denomination other than these contributions from our readers.—*Everett J. Thomas*

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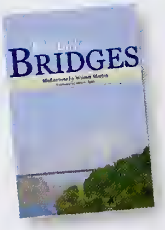

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Counterinsurgency force reaps peace

Mennonite Economic Development Associates meet in Silicon Valley.

> Though the intent of counterinsurgency sounds very Rambo and unMennonite . . . this is what our work does: This is peace building. —Helen Loftin

Efforts to help poor women in some of the world's most volatile areas are like a Mennonite counterinsurgency force with a peace dividend of its own.

This is according to Helen Loftin, who directs Pakistan projects for Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), which promotes business as a Christian calling and specializes in "business solutions to poverty."

"Though the intent of counterinsurgency sounds very Rambo and un-Mennonite, I would argue that this is what our work does," she told 320 people at MEDA's annual convention Nov. 5-8 in San José, Calif. "This is peace building. How are we doing it? By strengthening economic opportunities for women."

In Pakistan, "the face of poverty is female," she said. "When food, water or medicine is scarce, men receive it first, then boys, then women, then girls."

Loftin said MEDA's programs have boosted incomes for thousands of homebound women entrepreneurs whose traditions do not allow them to interact with men beyond their immediate family members.

The programs utilize "go-between" sales agents recruited from less restrictive social classes to link women producers to more lucrative markets in sectors such as home embroidery and village dairy production. Loftin said MEDA could look at these programs as a new frontier "to showcase our brand of peacemaking."

Under the theme "New Frontiers: New Solutions," the gathering was held in the heart of California's Silicon Valley. Opening keynoter Stephen Kreider Yoder, San Francisco bureau chief of the *Wall Street Journal*, said Silicon Valley was one of the country's "most concentrated spots of green technology," with billions being raised every year by idealistic companies hoping to become the green tech version of Google.

Despite that idealism, however, little was being done to adapt new technologies to benefit the needy, Yoder said.

Keynote speaker Len Penner, president of Cargill Canada, said that the world had plenty of food but because of cost and uneven distribution 16,000 children died every day from hunger-related causes. Food production needed to double by 2050, but "this is something we can do" without drawing huge amounts of additional land into production. Part of the solution was "to use all the tools in the tool box," including the use of controversial genetically modified foods, he said.

MEDA president Allan Sauder reported that despite a difficult economic year MEDA ended 2009 in the black, as a drop in contributions had been made up by increased revenue from grants and contracts.—*Wally Kroeker of MEDA*

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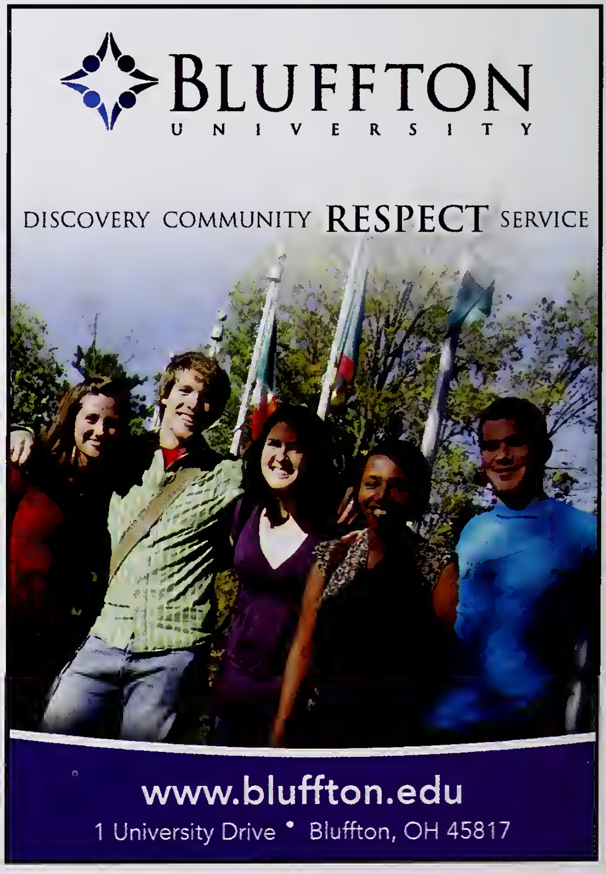

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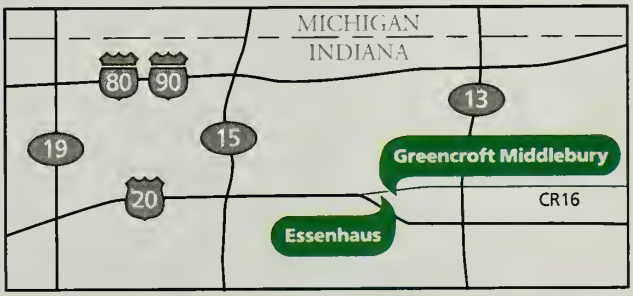
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CALENDAR

The ***third Sarasota Mennonite Male Voice Music Festival***, with Lloyd Kauffman as director, is being planned for 2010 with **Bahia Vista Mennonite Church** again serving as host. Practices will be held on the Thurs. evenings of Jan. 28, Feb. 4 and Feb. 11, 7-9 p.m.; Sat. morning and afternoon on Feb. 13, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; and Sun afternoon on Feb. 14, 2-4 p.m. The program will be presented on Sun. evening, Feb. 14, 6 p.m. All men who enjoy singing to God's glory are invited to participate in this thrilling event. Any questions may be addressed to: Paul Wenger at pwenger4@com-cast.net or 941-870-3737. (Note: If you desire to come to Sarasota only for the extended festival weekend, i.e., Feb. 11-14, please register your interest in advance. The music and a learning CD will be sent to you ahead of time.)

WORKERS

Deckman, Michael, was licensed as associate pastor at Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, Mountaintop, Pa., on Oct. 25.

Hussey, B. Van, was licensed as youth pastor at Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, Mountaintop, Pa., on Oct. 25.

Martin, Nelson W., ended a term as bishop/overseer for Lititz District, Lititz, Pa., on Nov. 1.

Mitchell, Anne, was licensed toward ordination on Nov. 22 at Prairie Street Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind., as a member of the pastoral transition team.

Oberholtzer, Leon, ended a term as bishop/overseer for Mellinger District, Mellinger, Pa., on Oct. 31.

Revis, Homer, was licensed as associate pastor at Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, Mountaintop, Pa., on Oct. 25.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Belknap, Courtney Mae, Nov. 21, to Steven and Valerie Schapansky Belknap, Inman, Kan.

Bowers, Emily Jane, Nov. 10, to Jeremy and Tara Turner Bowers, Hartville, Ohio.

Hamsher, Sophia Grace, Nov. 13, to Mark and Heidi Miller Hamsher, Sugarcreek, Ohio.

Klink, Kaitlyn Stephanie, Nov. 16, to Nate and Julia Miller Klink, Millersburg, Ohio.

Lehman, Kennedy Grace, Nov. 2, to Jason and Jill Rullo Lehman, Boswell, Pa.

Leichty, Shannon Erica, Oct. 23, to Michael and Melanie Schotsman Leichty, Wellman, Iowa.

Meyer, Cole Reid, Nov. 7, to Tim and Michelle Reid Meyer, Wayland, Iowa.

Mock, Greta Joy, Sept. 14, to Michael and Michelle King Mock, Boswell, Pa.

Mock, Wesley Philip, Nov. 13, to Timothy and Jodi Alwine Mock, Boswell, Pa.

Moser, Gideon Matthew, Nov. 1, to Matthew and Rachel Roggie Moser, Croghan, N.Y.

Nice, Carter Anthony and Kylie Renee (twins), Nov. 16, to Kyle and Tina Landis Nice, Souderton, Pa.

Nyce, Claire Avery, Nov. 20, to Joel and Heather Good Nyce, Schwenksville, Pa.

Ropp, Hannah Elizabeth, Nov. 22, to Stacey and Angie Cerda Ropp, London, England.

Sadler, Ian Robert, Oct. 22, to Nathan and Jocelyn Hartzler Sadler, Fairfax, Iowa.

Schlabach, Eve Anabelle, Oct. 1, to Joel and Megan Beachy Schlabach, Uniontown, Ohio.

Showalter, Jillian Kaye, Nov. 10, to Hollins and Rachel Stuckey Showalter, Indianapolis, Ind.

Sommers, Landon Grant, Sept. 23, to Kerry and Faith Raber Sommers, Uniontown, Ohio.

MARRIAGES

Bell/Harder: Jon Bell, Stayner, Ontario, and Kim Harder, Uxbridge, Ontario, Sept. 12, at George and Anna Reesor's farm, Stouffville, Ontario.

Eaves/Lehman: Gregory Eaves, Lowville, N.Y., and Stephanie Lehman, Lowville, Oct. 24, at First Mennonite Church, New Bremen, N.Y.

Gingerich/Kanagy: Fred Gingerich, Chicago, Ill., and Sarah Kanagy, Chicago, Nov. 14, at The Tasting Room, Chicago.

Rex/Yoder: Jessica Rex and Ben Yoder, Aug. 8, in Aurora, Ohio.

Thomas/Tremberth: Chance Thomas, Johnstown, Pa., and Leah Tremberth, Johnstown, Sept. 5, at Thomas Mennonite Church, Hollsopple, Pa.

DEATHS

McDowell, Wiley, 97, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 27. Spouse: S. Esther Beechy McDowell (deceased). Parents: Henry and Della Yoder McDowell. Children: John E., Barbara E. Smucker; four grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 30 at Greencroft Meetinghouse, Goshen.

Shue, Charles, 85, Sarasota, Fla., died Sept. 20. Spouse: Ruth Liechty Shue. Parents: Normal and Mary Elizabeth Neff Shue. Children: Richard, Larry, Michael, Jeanie Kauffman, Sue Ellen Penner, Janet Shue; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Sept. 25 in Sarasota.

Trumbo, Norvell Preston, Jr., 86, Harrisonburg, Va., died Oct. 13. Spouse: Doris Showalter Trumbo. Children: Steven, Scott, Brent; four grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 17 at Trissels Mennonite Church, Rockingham County, Va.

Wenger, John C., 78, Manheim, Pa., died Oct. 11. Spouse: Erma Kready Wenger. Parents: Phares S. and Nora Cassel Wenger. Children: Gloria Martin, John L., P. Kevin, Sherwin K., Marv K.; 12 grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 18 at Erisman Mennonite Church, Manheim.

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Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary seeks a ***full-time director of development***, beginning no later than July 1, 2010, to manage the planning and work of the seminary Development Office, with primary focus on raising funds for the annual operational budget and promoting strong church-seminary relations. Qualifications include commitment to Jesus Christ, passion for the role of theological education in the church, ability to communicate well, proven record in development or marketing, and proven supervisory and organizational skills. AMBS does not discriminate with regard to race, sex, color, national origin, age or disability. Commitment to AMBS's mission and support of its Anabaptist, evangelical and ecumenical vision is important. See job description at www.ambs.edu/employment. Send letter of application, resumé and three references by Feb. 15 to Ron Ringenberg, vice president, AMBS, 3003 Benham Avenue, Elkhart, IN 46517, or rringenb@ambs.edu.

Are you interested in part-time team ministry? If so, consider the **Hutchinson Community Church of the Brethren** located in Hutchinson, Kan. We invite you to join us as we share the good news of Jesus Christ through worship and praise and in service to others. We are seeking a ***bivocational individual to be part of our preaching team and to help guide our ministry to young adults and young families***. Other areas of ministry could also be considered. Please pass this on to others you know or would recommend who may also be interested. Visit our Web site at www.hutchcob.org for more information about us or contact Ed Switzer at 620-728-5804 or 620-504-6141.

Hesston College seeks a ***head coach for women's soccer***. The coach is responsible for all aspects of the program: recruiting, coaching, scheduling, etc. Qualifications: knowledge of competitive-level soccer; ability to teach fundamentals and strategies and work with female athletes; commitment to Mennonite higher education, Mennonite Church USA and the mission of Hesston College. Bachelor's degree or higher required. Half-time position begins August 2010, with recruiting in spring 2010 desired. Qualified candidates may add other Hesston College responsibilities to increase contract beyond half-time. Review of applications begins immediately and continues until the position is filled. To apply, send resumé, application and faith statement to Don Weaver, Director of Human Resources, donw@hesston.edu, Box 3000, Hesston, KS 67062. See www.hesston.edu/employment. EOE

Bluffton University invites applications and nominations for the position of ***vice president for fiscal affairs*** to begin summer 2010. The person in this position reports to the president as a member of the university's senior leadership team and functions as the university's chief financial officer. Responsibilities include annual operating and capital budgeting, long-term financial planning and analysis, capital acquisition and investment strategy, legal affairs, annual audits and internal financial controls. The position supervises staff in business office, human resources, physical plant and information technology. An MBA and/or CPA or equivalent plus experience in financial administration and supervision is required. See http://www.bluffton.edu/about/employment/ for information and application details. Applications will be reviewed as received until the position is filled. EOE.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email Advertising@TheMennonite.org.

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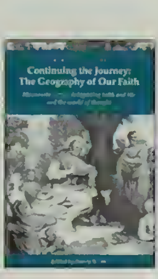
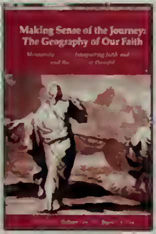


Continuing the Journey: The Geography of Our Faith (ACRS Memoirs 2), ed. Nancy V. Lee."Turn names often seen in news articles into friends," invites *Katie Funk Wiebe*, as 16 elders share their life stories. 404 p; $23.95



Making Sense of the Journey: The Geography of Our Faith (Cascadia edition, ACRS Memoirs 1) ed. Robert Lee and Nancy V. Lee. Mennonite writers connected to Eastern Mennonite University offer moving memoirs. 352 p $21.95

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No easy way out

Gordon Houser

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My father used to tell me there are no free lunches. Whenever something appeared too good to be true, he said, it probably was.

Meanwhile, many of us want our free lunches. We want easy solutions to difficult problems. And the more difficult the problem, the greater our denial or resistance to solving it becomes.

One of those great problems—an enormous one—is climate change (a better term, perhaps, than global warming, since people will say, as a cold day hits, "What global warming?"). Tackling this problem will involve sacrifice, something most of us are adverse to. We hold on to the hope that some easy solution will present itself and we won't have to change our behavior.

A new book out reinforces this hope. *SuperFreakonomics: Global Cooling, Patriotic Prostitutes, and Why Suicide Bombers Should Buy Life Insurance* by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner (William Morrow, $29.99) tells the story of New York City in 1880 facing the enormous problem of too much horse manure. By then, more than 150,000 horses lived in New York, and each one relieved itself of, on average, 22 pounds of manure per day. Officials saw no solution to this. But by 1912, autos in New York outnumbered horses, and in 1917, the city's last horse-drawn streetcar made its final run.

"When a solution to a given problem doesn't lie right before our eyes, it is easy to assume that no solution exists," the authors write. "But history has shown again that such assumptions are wrong." What they don't say is that autos then created their own problem, which we face today.

Levitt and Dubner tell this story to make the point that we don't need to worry about climate change because some solution will present itself.

They go on to claim that the global-warming threat has been exaggerated, and they offer possible schemes that could fix the problem. But neither Leavitt, an economist, nor Dubner, a journalist, has any training in science.

Climatologist Raymond T. Pierrehumbert has already offered a scathing critique of their ideas, writes Elizabeth Kolbert in *The New Yorker* (Nov. 16). He says the authors "failed to do the most elementary thinking."

Kolbert writes that some of Levitt and Dubner's ideas are an attempt "to replace a faith in science with a belief in science fiction."

Certainly scientists can make errors and practice groupthink at times, but the evidence for climate change is overwhelming—so much so that one suspects the motives of those countering it. Is it short-term self-interest, fear of change?

It's the poor of the world who are most affected by climate change. Jim Ball in *Sojourners* (December) lists "some possible consequences of global warming in the forthcoming decades":

- 40-170 million people put at increased risk of hunger and malnutrition;
- 1-2 billion people already in a water-stressed situation seeing further reduction of water availability;
- 100 million people impacted by coastal flooding and millions more by inland flooding;
- nearly 3 billion people at increased risk for violent conflicts; and more.

In that same issue, Janet L. Parker argues that "fear rarely leads to enlightened collective action for the common good." Instead, she writes, we should emphasize Jesus' command to love our neighbor as ourselves.

At the heart of facing climate change is our need as Christians to love God's creation and be willing to sacrifice our self-interests in order to show that love.

FILMS

Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire (R) pushed me beyond my comfort zone. Precious is a struggling teen in Harlem who is pregnant with her second child—both children a result of her father raping her. The scenes of her parents' abuse made me squirm with anxiety and anger. I left wondering how so many bad things can happen to one person yet inspired by Precious' amazing strength.—*Anna Groff*

The Blind Side (PG-13) tells the true story of Michael Oher, a homeless black teenager, who is taken in by Leigh Anne Tuohy and her husband, Sean. Michael eventually becomes a pro football player. The film confronts some stereotypes re racism but has the potential to reinforce others, such as whites saving poor blacks. It's worth seeing and discussing.—*gh*

BOOKS

The Roots of Concern: Writings on Anabaptist Renewal 1952-1957, edited by Virgil Vogt (Cascade Books, 2009, $23), includes essays from the *Concern* pamphlets written by North American Mennonites in Europe in the 1950s. Essays by Paul Peachey, John W. Miller, John Howard Yoder, David A. Shank, Norman Kraus and others call Mennonites to a radical Christianity.

He Flew Too High: A Novel by Ken Yoder Reed (Henry Holt & Company, 2009, $22) uses the Icarus myth as a frame for a cautionary tale from the mid-1950s about Saul McNamara, who leaves his military career, marries a Mennonite bishop's daughter, then leads a charismatic revival movement that tears the community apart and leads to tragedy. Reed's use of detail and suspense strengthen the narrative, though at points the pace slows.

DVDS

Ballast (unrated) is set in the Mississippi delta, where one man's suicide dramatically affects three people's lives. While many films paint their characters as good or bad, this one depicts in powerful realism the wounds, mistakes and stabs at goodness that people in dire circumstances experience. It's one of the best films of 2008.—*gh*

Those of us who bring you TheMennonite wish you God's richest blessings during this season of hope and light.

Left to right: Anna Marie Groff (assistant editor), Celina Romero (bookkeeper), Gordon Houser (associate editor), Rebecca Helmuth (circulation and advertising coordinator), Everett Thomas (editor), Dee Birkey (designer). Not pictured: Nora Miller (proofreader) and Martha Graber (reads *The Mennonite* on audio cassettes).

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Everett J. Thomas

Don't waste a crisis

A crisis is a terrible thing to waste. In a down economy, this is the point: During what is now being called the Great Recession, congregations must take the opportunity to make changes more radical than would be possible during good times.

The year may be coming to an end, but the lingering effects of this recession will continue to stress congregations and leaders for some time. Some have utilized the current economic climate to make changes.

To find out what Mennonite congregations have done this year, Mennonite Mutual Aid polled 200 pastors and received 49 responses. MMA then published the results in its newsletter *Teleios*. We also published the results in our Nov. 17 issue.

On the list of changes reported by these pastors were several that caught my attention:

- installing solar panels to provide electricity;
- considering sale of the church building and other property;
- using any extra funds to reduce church debt.

Perhaps none of these would have happened without an economic crisis that is creating urgency for change. Current financial pressures also appear to be pushing congregations to look at another change: electronic giving.

While 2009 was a tough year, we hope we have not wasted the opportunities afforded by a crisis economy.

MMA's research found that some congregations are exploring or have begun using this new tool proven to increase contributions from parishioners. Church consultants say electronic giving options increase giving by young adults and those who do not attend church every week.

Along with most congregations and other church organizations, we at *The Mennonite* made some changes as a result of the financial challenges before us. The major redesign of this magazine, to be launched in January 2010, is an example. Had the economy been sailing along, we may not have made the changes that are on the way.

The decision to redesign the magazine began as a way to reduce costs. But it turned into an energizing experience for staff and board members as we imagined new possibilities. We looked at some sections of the current magazine that readers rank lowest and decided to replace them with some innovations: a new column by and about young adults, a news analysis section, a crossword puzzle with puzzlers' names listed and, when a subject warrants the space, an article up to 3,000 words. We will also publish more original news stories and give increased attention to the cover of each issue, commissioning a photographer when necessary. Mennonite Church USA's incoming executive secretary Ervin Stutzman will grace the cover of our January 2010 cover.

Financial pressures caused by the Great Recession are coinciding with a seismic shift toward electronic journalism, forcing many secular newspapers into bankruptcy. We feel the same pressures as those who advertise in *The Mennonite* reduced their ad buys or stopped altogether. Our response: to generate more advertising revenue on our Web site and in our two electronic magazines (ezines), *TMail* and *Meno Acontecer*. Now we talk about the combined readership of all four media. With more than 10,000 unique visitors on our Web site each month and some 3,000 ezine subscribers, more than 30,000 people interested in Mennonite Church USA read what we publish. This is up from approximately 25,000 five years ago.

Not all the 2009 changes forced by our current economy are good, however. Most notably for us: discontinuing *OurFaith Digest* when its advertising revenue dried up. Had we continued to print and distribute that wonderful digest, it would have cost us more than the $13,600 loss we now carry on our books.

While 2009 was a tough year, and we were pushed into making changes we did not originally welcome, on this side of those decisions we are excited about the new year. We hope we have not wasted the opportunities afforded by a crisis economy. How about you and your congregation?—*ejt*

This article is available as a podcast at www.TheMennonite.org

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